

Normally a calf interferes with the bull trying to copulate. This time, thanks to science, everything was in favour of the bull, and the guards gave graphic descriptions of the copulating, with sound effects.

At half past two that afternoon I stalked a mature bull and darted it in the right flank with an eighteen c.c. dart. It took off at a gallop with the horsemen following fast. In six minutes ataxia set in and it could not run straight. It had already covered two miles.

In the distance, I heard the riders shouting hoarsely. Something was wrong. We sped towards the shouting. I hoped no one was injured. There was always a fear in my mind of a black rhino catching Nick or Owen unawares; there were so many things that could go wrong. We stopped to listen and hooves pounded in the distance. A herd of wildebeest and zebra ran towards us with Nick galloping behind. The game veered off at the sight of the vehicle, the zebra yodelling loudly.

Nick pulled up Zoom and said anxiously, 'For Christ's sake come quickly, the rhino's gone over the krantz.'

We hurried to the spot and saw where trees and boulders had been ripped out in the rhino's plunge. He lay squealing on his back.

'God, it was grim,' Nick said as we slid down to the rhino. 'The poor devil was balancing on the edge and we got him away, then he turned and went tumbling down. The sound the body made thumping against the rocks made me sick in the stomach. This one is a real Jonah.'

Toni avoided the flailing legs and gave the rhino an intravenous injection of antidote. We waited for it to take effect.

'Get a rope,' Toni said curtly.

John Clark ran up the steep slope and was back in no time. He made a slip knot and lassoed one of the front legs. When Jonah jerked his leg it pulled four of us about like a tug of war team. We tried for a quarter of an hour to right the animal but the angle of the slope made it difficult for us to move, and soon we were drenched with sweat. The antidote

had taken effect and the rhino was thrashing about and calling pathetically.

We rested a while and Nick told me how he had avoided colliding with a reed buck ram while following Jonah. 'We'll be lucky if someone isn't badly injured,' he said.

There was a flurry of movement and Jonah rolled over and heaved himself on to his feet. We scrambled for cover. John took a few steps forward and slipped the rope off the front leg.

'Good man,' Toni said.

John shook his head and laughed. Bravery was a matter of course to him. Sometimes he had to be reprimanded for the risks he took.

Jonah stood up again, breathing heavily, his body dark with sweat and his muscles trembling. In the half darkness of evening, with long shadows thrown by the trees and up-turned rocks in the silent bush, it was a primeval setting. He walked forward a few steps, lost his balance and fell heavily. He tried to get up and rolled completely over, dislodging loose stones.

'Look out, grab him! He's going to roll down more!' Owen yelled.

It was too late. Jonah was down and rolling. He crashed into a boulder with a deep thud and was wedged against a strangler fig growing from a crack in the rock face. He breathed in short gasps and a trickle of blood ran from his nose. Toni shook his head and I knew Jonah didn't have long to live. He reared his head, shuddered and lay still.

'Sorry about this,' Toni said sadly. 'But this illustrates a hazard that besets all animals released after immobilization; misadventure is always likely before all faculties are fully recovered.'

I made arrangements for John to come out early the following morning and chop the horns off the skull. The human hyenas would not take long to find the remains and the horns would be stolen and sold to an eager market always on the look-out for this supposedly powerful aphrodisiac.

It had been a long and tiring day and to take my mind off

the day's tragedy during the return journey I spoke to Toni about early attempts at immobilization.

'When were the first animals darted?' I asked.

Toni described how in the United States in 1953 a twist drill coated with a mixture of honey and miotus had been fired from an airgun, and deer were actually immobilized. Then in 1957 Crockford invented the dart-syringe. This changed the whole course of immobilization because it was now possible to deliver a measured dose. The Palmer Chemical Company became interested commercially and mass-produced the syringes and got the Crossman Company to make the gun, now known as the Palmer Capchur gun.

It was, as always, a pleasure to hear Toni speak. His enunciation and pitch were perfect and his text to the point. He gave a clear resumé of our captures to date, listing our successes and failures and outlining the direction we would have to follow when he left in a few days time. He cleared my mind of the clutter of emotion, fatigue and worry; our purpose came into focus and our future course distinct.

'One more rhino with you chaps tomorrow, then I will be on my way back to East Africa. So we must make sure that this one gets to Mkuze Game Reserve. It had also better be a female companion for Charlie,' Toni said.

At half past one the next day I stalked and darted Minnehaha in the right shoulder. We had found her grazing in the open on Mhlopheni flats. A strong north-east wind was blowing, which made darting much easier. The horsemen followed her for two miles then she slowed down and stopped after twelve minutes. She staggered a little then ran across a dry stream bed and got her head against a tree. We were able to walk up to her and pull the dart out.

'How are we going to get her to the lorry?' Owen asked.

'Walk her there, like you led Babs,' Toni said calmly.

'But do you reckon we'll get her up that bank, Doc?' Owen said. He pointed to a steep ledge between us and the on-coming lorry.

Toni nodded his head. He gave Minnie twenty c.c. of antidote. She flicked her ear, spattering blood on my shirt.

John Clark tagged her yellow in one ear and red in the other.

Minnehaha stirred and John slipped a thick rope round her head. She persistently moved forward so Nick and Owen chopped the tree down. She stumbled but Toni pushed against her flank, turned her and we all grabbed the rope and pulled. She came along quietly but with jerky footsteps, dragging her toes through the coarse sand.

We led her to a semblance of a path made by small antelope. John Clark hacked footholds for us with a cane-knife. The smell of dust, human sweat, crushed grass, and the tang of rhino lingered in the confines of the stream. Minnie took the first steps up the bank with ease but then balked. She was at an awkward angle. As we pushed her backside she leant against us and we slipped down. Norman got the giggles and we became weak and helpless with laughter. John Clark hung on to the head rope, pleading with us to hurry as his arms ached. Nick clambered up, jerked her tail and she moved uphill again, but collapsed at the top. Someone kicked her on the neck to try to revive her.

'Now don't be unkind,' Toni said.

Nick said later, 'One doesn't expect this expression of concern from a scientist. His attitude to the rhino right from the beginning really impressed me. I saw anguish on his face every time a rhino died.'

We measured Minnehaha and Toni administered an antidote and five c.c. Largactil. At half past two Toni injected more Lethidrone but she was very sleepy and in a few minutes she quietly lay down and fell into a deep slumber. We got her moving after three o'clock but it took nearly half an hour to get her into the crate.

John Clark had nailed a strip of masonite over the slats at the front of the crate. She could not jam her horn in the corner but she fell on her side. When the crate tipped she scrambled to her feet and kept her balance for the rest of the loading operation. We passed two ropes through the crate under her chest to prevent her lurching forward when the lorry went through dongas.

Six hours later she was in Mkuze Game Reserve.

That evening we discussed the merits and demerits of

sending the white rhino to zoos. We all had a horror of captivity but I felt it was important to have our rare animals all over the world, as well as in their former ranges.

Toni backed me up. 'You are right,' he said. 'I think a hundred rhinos ought to be sent to zoos; this will ensure the establishment of breeding units. The question of national prestige connected with special animals is catching on all over the world. In Europe they are going to tremendous lengths to recreate the European bison. They have only been able to get a small nucleus by buying animals from zoological gardens.'

He gave us other examples of breeding nuclei being established from zoos, and said, 'I hope that all the nations in Africa will become extremely conscious of the special animals they have got and which exist nowhere else in the world.'

'How long do you think we would have to keep the rhino before it would be safe to send them to a zoo?' John Clark asked. He seemed to sense that he was going to be responsible for this aspect.

'This is something you chaps will have to work out,' Toni said. 'As we have demonstrated, a rhino can be taken over a hundred miles straight from the field. If you were going to send them overseas you would have to condition them to artificial food; this may take time. They need at least a fortnight in captivity to stabilize them completely.'

On the morning of 30 June 1961, as we prepared to catch our first rhino alone, Toni left for Uganda. He explained to me in detail how to mix the drugs and left enough Themalon, Sernyl, Largacil, and hyoscine to capture two more rhino. Toni had become one of us and I pleaded with him to leave his job in Uganda and return to South Africa to direct the rhino saving operation.

'It's completely unnecessary,' he said. 'I may come back in September to start off the large-scale translocation, but all you need is a better gun, more syringes, needles that really work, and enough drug. It will take a few months to stock up then you can quite easily operate on your own.' His parting

words were, 'Send me a telegram on how you get on with the twelfth rhino.'

At a quarter past twelve after carefully mixing the drugs I stalked a two-thousand pound female we named June after the month of our success.

She was grazing calmly on the western side of the Madhlozi stream when I crawled up and darted her at ten paces. She ran north for three hundred yards then turned towards the Madhlozi. The horsemen galloped towards us, whooping loudly to try to stop her crossing the stream.

'If she crosses the Madhlozi we won't get the truck across,' Maqubu said.

June ran towards the banks, which were twenty feet high. The drug had not taken effect and she hesitated, charged back to a game path and disappeared. The two horsemen collided as they kicked and urged their horses after her. She had gone upstream, I could tell by the swarm of flies hovering above. Horses' hooves knocked against stones and Owen shouted, 'Turn her Nick, turn her!'

John Clark came running barefoot down the hill slope, his long trousers flapping against the grass and his shirt tails streaming behind. Maqubu grunted. He was always impressed by John's tough feet. John ran to the edge of the Madhlozi and shouted to draw my attention to June who had emerged eight hundred yards upstream followed by the horsemen.

Reedbuck scattered, whistling shrilly, and four little warthog piglets, their tails straight in the air, trotted after their mother.

June was running strongly towards the foot of Nqoloti then she stumbled.

'This is it,' John shouted happily. 'The drug's working.'

June slowed to a walk and even from our position we could see the glint of sweat on her back. The horsemen cantered nearer, Owen's long hair rising and falling against his neck. Four passing red-billed ox-peckers landed on June's back and set up alarm cries as the horsemen approached. She took no notice of their calls but plodded forward jerkily. Nick and Owen followed slowly on foot, leading the horses which

swished their tails to chase off the horde of rhino flies. June stumbled and stared fixedly at a boulder shiny after generations of warthog scratching themselves against it. Her tail curled and uncurled and she splayed her legs like a drunk on the point of keeling over. Urine dribbled down her legs and she sweated heavily on her head, ears, flanks, and along the ridge of her back. I turned to speak to John and she was down.

We slid down the stream bank and ran upstream till we found a game path to climb out. John beat me to the horsemen.

'Well, this is our first rhino,' John said proudly.

'It's not going to be easy getting her across that lot,' Nick said. He pointed to the wide depression of the Madhlozi.

We discussed a plan of action and decided to give her a little Lethidrone then lead her across.

'Sounds easy,' Owen said. 'But it's a mighty long way.'

'Well, let's get started,' Nick said.

He led the horses to tether while I mixed a bottle of antidote. I followed Toni's injunctions as though my life depended on it, even shaking the bottle as he did.

Maqubu guided the lorry to the nearest point on the opposite bank. June rose suddenly and stood with quivering limbs, then collapsed on to her brisket again. We measured her as she lay there breathing noisily, mucous trickling from her nostrils. This alarmed me but John had seen it with other rhino. I was far more alert today and noticed things I had not seen when we were with Toni. This was always the case when one did a job alone for the first time. It was the best way to learn.

Nick Steele smothered tick grease around her anus, vagina, under the hind legs, and around her teats. The tough tortoiseshell ticks crawled on their long brown legs into the grass. They were a menace to animals and caused large sores on horses and dogs that were not frequently de-ticked.

June breathed six times to the minute, a healthy sign. The rattling noise in her throat that worried me was only mucous. The sweating pattern was constant, starting on the head and front legs in the folds of the skin, then along the belly and

underneath to the teats. It was always the side to the sun that started first.

'It's damned interesting that the white rhino don't have any of the erosions on their sides that the black rhino have,' Owen observed.

'Well I'd rather be dealing with the white ones right now,' Nick laughed. 'But I look forward to catching the black rhino, they're such dramatic beasts.'

We lowered the crate off the lorry, gave June a small injection of antidote and she walked calmly into the crate. Half an hour later she was ready to go. John Clark offered to go with her to Mkuze and he delivered her there safely at half past nine that night.

Next morning I sent a telegram to Toni that must have puzzled the postal officials a little. It read: 'To Mkuze a 2000 lb girl called June. Delivered fit and well.'

This ended the experiments with the drug combination of Themalon or morphine, Largactil, Hyoscine, and Sernyl, names that had become household words. Toni had proved that not only were the drugs a success but that after training, field men could use them without fear of losses. The whole concept of rhino removal had changed dramatically. Conservation had taken a stride forward; it was the beginning of the end of the professional trappers who captured rhino by rope. Dr Hubert Lang, the American scientist who visited Umfolozi Game Reserve in the 1920's advised the removal of the white rhino in 1930. It had taken thirty-one years for a proper technique to evolve.

As I lay in bed that night looking out into the starlight with the wild sounds of leopard, nightjars, dikkops and hyena calling, I thought how pleased Vaughan-Kirby, the first game conservator of Zululand, would have been. There were days when he wondered if the small herd of rhino would live to see another dawn. I thought of Captain Potter too, and his efforts to get a few rhino into the Hluhluwe Game Reserve in the 1930's. Then there was Sir Charles Saunders, a man who had done much for the reserves. People had accused him of being a fanatic because he pro-

tected the white rhino. He would have been pleased with what we had done. Umfolozi Game Reserve would never be the same, but we had a lot to be thankful for. The white rhino were on their way to being re-established.

Chapter 13

Another Taste of Wilderness

THE experiments with the new drugs had been outstandingly successful. The Natal Parks Board now agreed to Colonel Vincent's request for a hundred white rhino to be sent to areas where they had occurred in the historical past. It was decided that the Kruger National Park would be the first recipients. But we were told that there was to be a four-month delay before further supplies of drugs reached South Africa. Our large-scale movement of rhino could only begin in October.

This gave me a chance to catch up with other work that had been neglected in the past month. But the first thing I did was to go on a two-day foot patrol with Maqubu. I felt I had to get away from the sense of urgency that had prevailed over the last month. I needed to taste the wilderness again and refresh my body and mind with the sights and sounds of Umfolozi. Remarkable though the capture of the rhino had been, it had also upset me to see these magnificent beasts humbled by a silver dart and a few c.c. of liquid, and close contact with the animal had robbed it of some of its wild beauty.

So Maqubu and I set out on a walk. It was before the spring rains when the north-east wind blows hard and every succeeding day gets hotter. The bush shimmered in the burning sun and the horizon was blurred in palls of smoke from a hundred veld fires in the surrounding tribal reserves. It was on days like this that the game came panting with thirst to those pans still holding water.

We made our way along a rhino footpath to a pan below

Mantianna hills. It was always fascinating to sit in a tree overlooking the pan and watch the game come down to drink and wallow.

Throughout the Umfolozi Game Reserve there are pans, shallow depressions where rhino and warthog wallow. Tourists in the reserve often reported seeing red rhino and warthog, thinking they were different species. The animals had merely wallowed in a red clay pan.

The origin of pans has been the cause of much speculation. On one occasion I observed how a pan began.

A warthog had been killed in the western part of the reserve and the carcass lay on top of an antbear hole. Vultures settled around the dead animal and during the pecking of the carcass flattened the grass nearby. The summer rains fell shortly afterwards and a small pool of water formed where the dead warthog and the vultures had been. Wandering warthog rolled in it a few times, then one morning I saw a white rhino bull wallowing. The pan grew larger over the years, deepened by rhino and warthog wallowing, then emerging with large blobs of mud adhering to the skin. But it is mainly the rhino who are the creators and maintainers of the pans.

The behaviour of white rhino arriving at a wallow differs, but a pattern does emerge. The hotter the day – and in Umfolozi temperatures rise to 110°F in the shade – the more the white rhino come to wallow in the pans. They usually have a lengthy drink first, then enter the pan to lie in the water for as long as two hours, moving their position slightly every ten to fifteen minutes, then later moving to the shade of trees.

In the afternoon they begin sighing and snorting loudly then get up and go back to the pan. They walk at a leisurely pace and invariably stop at a dung heap to defecate or urinate. The rhino then enter the pan. If the water is deep, they might go in backwards. Their next action is to stick their horns into the mud, often submerging the head up to the eyes in water. After the horns are well covered with mud the rhino lie in the wallow and begin to roll from side to side

and at times right on to their backs with all four legs sticking up in the air. The accompanying *Stomoxys* flies move off until a dry patch appears then try to buzz back and settle. Terrapins swim up to the rhino and pick off the thick bloated ticks near the anus and scrotum.

If the water is deep the wallowing about in the mud will take place on the edge, in this way enlarging the pan. After moving about in the mud for three to five minutes the rhino get up, move to another muddy section and repeat the performance. Then depending upon the temperature they either stay in the mud for a few hours or go to the shade again. When undisturbed, rhino go straight to a rubbing post after wallowing.

Rubbing stumps are usually a firmly-anchored boulder, a termite mound, a tree stump – normally a hard wood like *nthombothi* (*Spirostachys africanus*) – or a tree. Many of the trees surrounding the wallows have been ring barked by the rubbing of animals over the years and polished as smooth as the best piece of household furniture.

Although rubbing and wallowing rids the rhino of ectoparasites, particularly ticks, it is the red-billed ox-peckers that perform that function most efficiently. Sometimes as many as twenty of these small tick birds run all over the rhino, even going into the ears and nostrils without disturbing their host. I once followed a white rhino bull all day and watched its behaviour when ox-peckers were about. While they fed on the parasites the birds made a variety of different calls and the rhino took no notice. Then I raised my hand and waved it about, and the calls of the ox-peckers changed to a high pitched shrill twittering. The rhino was immediately alert and stood up, looking around. I kept quiet and it lay down again. A troop of baboons came over the hill and the ox-peckers' call changed to a hissing sound. The rhino lifted its head and listened but as the bird call did not change, it relaxed again.

I have been grateful to ox-peckers, many times because their shrill alarm call in dense bush was a sure indication of black rhino. Horses learn to react to the alarm calls too.

But ox-peckers have declined drastically over the years

because they feed on ticks of cattle that have been through arsenical dips; one more result of 'progress'.

White rhino occasionally like to sand-bathe and resort to special spots to do so, but this is in the winter when there is no water in the pans. Except for three pans filled artificially, all the pans in the Umfolozi Game Reserve rely on rainfall or the flooding of the rivers.

After a very dry season at least an inch of rain is required to fill the pans. If it is a year of average rainfall, pans remain full until the end of March, then the majority dry up rapidly. The pans Dadethu (named because the sister of an Mletwa chief was taken by a crocodile), Mqizweni, and Ingwenyeyinqina (The Hunting Place of the Crocodile) usually retain their water for most of the year because they are filled with the overflow of the two Umfolozi rivers. The Mpafa water-hole also holds water for long periods.

These pans are not, however, favoured by white rhino for wallowing purposes. They prefer the shallower pans, probably because there is less chance of their getting bogged down. They have an intuitive fear of deep water. This fear was illustrated when a white rhino bull that lived on a small reed island upstream from the Mdindini drift on the White Umfolozi river, decided to vacate his home when the river rose two feet. It took him nearly three-quarters of an hour to cross the seventy yards of river. He took advantage of every sandbank, stepping very gingerly whenever he approached a deep channel. He stuck in the sand and only pulled himself out with tremendous exertion. When he was nearly across he fell into a deep channel near the west bank. He disappeared for a few seconds then surfaced and after a hard struggle got his head on to the bank. He rested then heaved his bulk out of the water. If the river had been a few inches higher he would probably have drowned. A black rhino would have trotted across without fear of trouble.

In the hot, dry months from August to October when all the central pans are dry, white rhino do lie in some of the shallower river pools, but always on the edge. I have never seen them carry out the same wallowing motions as they do in the pans. Sometimes after floods a muddy depression is

formed near the reed beds and both rhino and warthog will wallow normally.

The deep pans with clay bottoms hold water for much longer than the shallow sandy ones because these are soon emptied by desiccating days of sun and animals flocking to drink.

At the height of the dry season even the deep clay pans become dry and only one or two pans over a wide area hold water.

It was a pan such as this I overlooked from my perch in the tree. Maqubu lay hidden nearby in the grass.

An old warthog with enormous tusks came out of the bush and took a few hesitant steps towards the water. Although I was well hidden behind the green boughs of the *Schotia* tree, it gazed in my direction, aware with the superior quality of animals, that danger was near. I was only armed with a camera and could not communicate that I had no intention of harming him.

Eventually the smell of water and his own driving thirst overcame his suspicions and he trotted the last few steps to the water. He lowered his head and drank long, deep and silently except for a few sucking noises. After drinking he looked around then flopped into a pool of thick mud. The delightful, all-encompassing feel of the mud erased all his fears and he uttered little squeaks of joy, and clicking sounds.

He rolled on to one side and over on to the other, then sat on his haunches like a dog and pushed his anus into the mud, squirming with obvious enjoyment. After completing a number of circular motions he sat for a full minute like some old philosopher contemplating a profound thought. Then as the ticks bothered him he moved, scraping his anus through the mud again. When the mud bath was over he walked to a flat rock and began rubbing, first along the neck, then he straddled the rock and vigorously rubbed his stomach along it. The daily toilet over the old warthog trotted into the bush.

Half an hour passed and the pan was deserted except for two brilliantly coloured scarlet-throated sunbirds and a flock of glossy starlings.

An isikehle bush francolin called raucously in the valley and overhead a yellow-billed kite swooped and dived after insects. Twice it dived low and whistled its fluting 'inhloccewa' call. Then it was still again, until like a tall guardsman on parade, a most magnificent nyala bull stalked through the shadows, bringing colour and grace to the pan.

There was a low grunting from behind a clump of trees and a sow warthog with three youngsters trotted straight to an isolated pool just in front of me. Then another two warthog came from the opposite direction and the pan was alive.

Both the nyala and the warthog trusted each other's ability to detect danger. Only when my camera clicked did they all freeze and stare silently in my direction. The nyala took a few steps towards me, its head jerking up and down and the white mane on its back flowing in the wind. I heard its hooves crunch through the sand, then it stood near the water, its reflection a mass of colour.

I was unable to contain myself and said aloud, 'God, you are a beauty.' In a flash the pan was deserted. The sun was going down and long afternoon shadows spread over the veld. The wind died and there was a strong smell of mud and rhino dung. This was so much part of the bush and age-old Africa.

I had climbed down from the tree when Maqubu whistled softly. He pointed and I heard the loud rumbling of two rhino fighting. We crept through the bush to watch, and sat like spectators at a professional prize fight, thirty yards away from the two fighters. Half an hour later it was too dark to see, and we left. The evening was full of the smell of rank sweat, dust, and acacia buds coming into flower.

As we walked to a grove of trees where we had our camp, Maqubu talked about white rhino. He said the young white rhino males that approached too close to a bull are frightened off by the aggressiveness of the adult. They run away with their tails curled in a posture similar to that which announces or accompanies defecation. I wondered whether in the case of fear this posture was only a displacement action. Similar behaviour is not unknown in man and finds expression in a number of slang phrases. With the white rhino the tail curling

could also be a mechanism which inhibits further aggression by the attacker. Maqubu said that when the white rhino runs, the head is in a lowered position almost touching the ground. The black rhino carries its head up. The difference is most marked.

White rhino react with fear in two sets of circumstances, firstly in the presence of man or a moving vehicle, and secondly, aggression by another member of the species.

Immediately danger threatens the head is raised and the ears keep in constant motion. If more than one rhino is present they will all stand facing different directions with buttocks touching. They take a few nervous steps and once suspicion has been aroused they will run away, tails curved over the back. Often the sound they make is like a barrel of water being shaken - a 'humping' noise. They usually canter for the first few yards, then change to a trot. This is an extraordinarily graceful gait and the rhino appears to bounce across the veld. The rhino run away from where they expect the danger to be. In many instances they unwittingly run towards you. Unless you are accustomed to these apparent charges, they can be very frightening. The clapping of hands, or shouting, is usually enough to make the white rhino realize its mistake and it will swerve away. Black rhino can also be frightened off on occasions by making a loud noise, but it is better to be up a tree.

The white rhino died in strange ways.

Some were caught in flash floods because in the early summer months they lie on the sandbanks of the two rivers.

Fighting between males, and between male and female, took a toll. We kept a log of rhino deaths and there appear remarks such as: 'Female died from injuries in a fight. Front leg broken.' 'Male found rotten, with horn stab marks on body.' 'Male near Nqabaneni died from gore wounds sustained in fighting. Large hole 8 inches by 3 inches on back just behind withers. Cuts on neck and chest. Later washed away by floods.'

There were many spectacular battles. One took place on the krantz overlooking the Mandhlagazi caves. The two bulls fought for hours, their low bellowing roars rising to elephant-

like screams. The smaller of the two slowly retreated to the cliff where it slipped, somersaulted on to a rocky ledge and broke its back. The next day I watched from above as the vultures circled a few feet below. With a hissing and a swishing of wings they hurtled out of the sky, circled, then landed on the rocks and strutted to the carcass.

White rhino mate and calve throughout the year. As a female is coming into heat a bull does everything it can to keep the cow in its territory. If another male challenges the bull the fighting is always in deadly earnest, the loser frequently dying. Very few bulls escape injuries.

When fighting, the rhino aim their horns behind the fore-leg or at the base of the neck. They also rush at each other like two huge battering rams on a battlefield of trampled bush and grass. This type of attack leads to extensive internal rupture and haemorrhage which accounts for some dead animals having little sign of external injury. But the majority of antagonists have deep horn punctures in vital organs. If one of the fighting rhino should fall or be knocked over, the other is upon it in a flash to inflict the coup de grace.

No quarter is given and the fighting goes on until one of the combatants runs away. Throughout the fighting, rumbles which rise to screams echo through the bush. The noise attracts other rhino and probably acts as a guide to other males unaware of a female in oestrus. The fight sometimes goes on for hours while the two adversaries charge each other, panting for breath and their whole bodies covered in an amber-coloured sweat.

The triumphant male then moves off with the female who during the fighting indifferently continues grazing. After signifying his intentions by nudging the female in the buttocks the male places his front legs on the female's back and copulates. Some males have been observed to stay mounted for an hour.

The gestation period is sixteen to eighteen months and the cow moves off to thick bush just before giving birth. When the calf is born the pair remain in the same area for a few days. It is during this very early period that the calf will follow the cow if they are disturbed. Once the calf has

developed proper co-ordination it always precedes the female, whereas the black rhino calf always follows its dam.

If a cow is not on heat and a bull comes near, the female will charge it and sometimes wound it mortally. The calf frustrates the male by getting in the way of the bull. Sometimes it is killed.

Like most grazers, white rhino spend as much time as possible feeding. Their behaviour during daylight hours is also governed by the weather. On hot, sunny days they move to the shade of trees and bush, usually on ridges where there is a breeze. Here they rest and sleep either lying down or standing up. In the late afternoon they will begin feeding again, and at dusk go to drink from the pans or the rivers, depending upon the season. On a cool day they will continue feeding throughout the day. They avoid the open plains in cold or windy weather, preferring to take cover in the thick bush.

During dry periods, white rhino usually drink once every twenty-four hours, but can go longer without water. In the rainy season there is water in every depression, waterhole, stream, and in the two main rivers. In the winter the pans dry up and only the Black Umfolozi and some of the small secluded streams have water. The White Umfolozi river dries up completely but water can be found just below the surface. Antbear and warthog dig in the bed of the river and the white rhino take advantage of the small holes to drink. The supply does not last long because the bulky rhino soon force sand into the holes and cover them up.

The white rhino bull urinates backwards, the urine squirting out in great sprays between the back legs. Before defecating the tail is curled over the back and when the act is completed a few vigorous scratching movements are made with the hind legs. The black rhino, however, scratches so vigorously it spreads its dung.

White rhino dung heaps are a familiar sight throughout the Umfolozi Game Reserve. Some observers have tried to assert that the rhino return regularly to the same dung heap each day, but the behaviour is not so rigidly determined.

Dung heaps are formed for several reasons. Individuals are

stimulated to defecate and urinate by the very presence of a dung heap. Throughout the game reserve there are steep and stony hills. These areas are not inhabited but they are regularly crossed. White rhino (and other animals) always climb by the easiest route, so over the course of time well-worn paths are made. Scattered along the paths are large dung heaps, many of them on the crest of the hills. The long hard climb makes the animal want to defecate. Although they are large, these particular dung heaps are only used infrequently by the passing rhino. Water points have well-worn paths converging from all sides and as long as the water remains, large and regularly used dung heaps are found. In thick bush, the rhino makes paths for protection against heat or cold. Dung heaps litter this type of area. Dung heaps also play a part in territorial demarcation.

White and black rhino sometimes use the same dung heap but there is a big difference in the composition of the dung. The black rhino dung has a slight reddish tinge from eating the nthombothi tree. It is also full of twigs and thorns. The fresh steaming dung of the white rhino is greenish but soon turn a dark brown and becomes chaff.

The dung heaps provide life for an assortment of insects, birds, and animals. The most common of the invertebrates is the dung beetle which can be seen hurrying along the rhino paths rolling a small ball of dung in which it lays its eggs. It is most active after the first spring rains and the dung heaps seem to be alive with heaving and pushing beetles. Harvester termites move along in a continuous stream carrying away undigested grass stems to their nests. A terrestrial species of the *Isopoda* is also common in the dung heaps.

The banded mongoose and other insectivorous mammals move about scratching and feeding. Crowned guineafowl, crested francolins, European rollers, and tchagra shrikes also feed and dust bathe in the heaps. Even the two monitor lizards, *Varanus niloticus* and *V. albigularis* have been seen digging, all proof of nature's continuous cycle.

Poachers

It took Maqubu a few minutes to get a fire going. I laid out my sleeping bag then collected water with a billycan from a dun-coloured pool. Frogs croaked nearby, first the bull-frog, then the tiny tree frog with its loud rattling cry. In the distance I heard the successive grunts of our lone lion.

'The King is calling for a mate,' Maqubu said and then imitated the loud roars of a lion.

A leopard coughed as though in reply and a jackal took up the refrain with a long drawn-out scream. We sat close to the fire absorbing its warmth. Maqubu cooked sqamba – hard maize meal porridge – and cut thin strips of impala meat which we roasted over the wood coals. The billy boiled over and I threw in a handful of coffee. It was a very simple meal but one I enjoyed more than restaurants in Europe could provide.

Maqubu and I sat talking for hours, his white teeth glinting in the firelight when he laughed. We spoke about poaching.

Poaching had always been a problem but when I first arrived at Umfolozi there were only four game guards to look after an area of seventy-two thousand acres. Poaching gangs fought with each other in the game reserve over the right to hunt in the best places. White poachers roared through the Corridor shooting reedbuck, kudu and other game by dazzling them with lights. It was murder on a large scale. But we persisted and when we caught a few policemen and chased a magistrate, everyone knew we meant business. I was warned that certain local people had started a fund to pay the legal fees for the first man to assault me. There were also some unpleasant social experiences when some people were so angry at their sons getting caught that they spat on the ground when I walked by. It left me unmoved for I had

been warned by Colonel Vincent when I joined the service that it would be necessary to have 'a hide as thick as the pachyderms for which we are responsible'.

By winter 1958 we had nearly eliminated white poaching. The new Ordinance, which imposed heavy penalties – the loss of vehicle, rifle, and a fine, and lawyer's fees, left only the diehards.

Tribal Africans, however, were a different story; to them the mere existence of the game reserve was a challenge to their hunting instincts. Maqubu recalled the serious incident he was involved in late that July.

Nick Steele and I had gone out on a patrol to the Nqoloti area. Hugh Dent was with us. We left Maqubu behind on duty at the office ready to rush game guards to any troubled area that a poaching gang might move into.

We walked to the Nqoloti foothills and camped the night near a game path. It was not long before we were rolled in our blankets and asleep. I woke at eleven o'clock to stoke the fire because a cold wet mist was rising from the river. I had just dozed off again when a crocodile grabbed a buck in the Munyawana stream; there was a most fearful scream then a splash. A little later some jackals passed on the opposite bank and set up their alarming yelps. Sleep was impossible. There seemed to be a stream of animals on their way to drink. The fire went out and there was no more wood gathered to stoke it up. I lay shivering for half an hour then dozed off once more. In my half-awake state I thought I heard a vehicle and I wondered if some European was on his way through the southern buffer zone to hunt. I woke with a jerk when a vehicle stopped at the edge of the river on our side. It was our tractor.

I heard voices then saw Ken's young brother, John Tinley, loom into sight.

'What's up, John?' I asked.

He sat down near the fire and said slowly, 'There has been a ghastly mess.'

I waited for him to continue then saw Maqubu, his son Khonamangele, and another game guard, Mnugeni, approach the fire.

'A man has been shot,' John said.

'Dead?' I asked.

'Yes.'

Hugh and Nick sat up in their sleeping bags and blankets.

'What's up?' Hugh asked.

'A poacher has been shot at Mcetshawanene,' John said quietly.

'Who did it?' I asked, looking at the guards.

'*Gima nkos* – it was I,' Maqubu answered firmly.

'Thank God for that,' I said aloud. Maqubu was not the sort of person to kill for no good reason.

While Hugh Dent translated, Maqubu described how, after receiving a report, he went out on patrol with Khonamangele and Mnugeni in the Sokwezela area of the game reserve. They saw eight Zulu poachers chasing a family of warthog. The guards stalked them until they were fifty yards away, then they stood up and challenged the poachers. The leader of the gang shouted, 'There are the game guards – let us stab them!'

Maqubu loaded his rifle. Khonamangele rushed in and tried to close with the leader who immediately stabbed at him with his assegai. The point went into Khonamangele's shirt, scraped his body, and came out on the other side. Viewed from behind, it looked to Maqubu as though the spear had gone right through his son's body. Khonamangele fell to the ground and Maqubu rushed at the man he thought was his son's murderer, and they scuffled. The gang leader, a tall, strong Zulu, broke loose, lifted his assegai and stabbed at Maqubu. Maqubu said he was warding off the thrust when his rifle went off. The poacher staggered back and ran towards a small ravine. Maqubu chased him and caught hold of the man as he slipped into the gully. The poacher lay still and Maqubu saw he was dead.

Hugh finished translating and we all sat quietly. A hyena wailed in the distance and the bush stirred for the false dawn. The guards piled wood on the fire and we moved closer for warmth.

I broke the stillness to ask John how long it had taken to reach us.

'Five hours,' he replied.

This was to travel twelve miles, but it was the first time in three years the track had been used. The thought of going back on the tractor was appalling, but there was no other way. We climbed aboard the trailer and rattled into the darkness.

We reached Mpila at seven o'clock and I had to go seven miles to the phone at the old tsetse fly outpost of Masimba. I got in touch with the South African police who said they would come at noon. I returned to Mpila and spent four hours getting statements and going over the points again and again. Maqubu was most distressed and said repeatedly that he would get the rope. I did what I could to reassure him.

'My heart is troubled,' he said. 'I am a Shembe, and it is against my religion to kill human beings.'

The CID detective did not arrive until half past three and it was nearly five o'clock before we reached the donga where the corpse lay. It was not a pleasant sight. The man's hands and legs were stretched out and his eyes were staring.

Maqubu described the whole incident to the detective. His story tallied with footprints, body wound, and everything else. I came away happy that Maqubu's story was obviously true.

The corpse was placed across the fork of a fallen nthombothi log and we walked back to the Land-Rover. The sun had already set and as the guards climbed over the last hill with the log on their shoulders, I watched the corpse's head silhouetted against the fading light. Death is so final.

Nick came up behind, dragging a warthog shoulder. The police and the game guards were horrified. Nick laughed and asked what difference would it make to the meat.

Months later the case was held at Mahlabatini court house. The building of red brick and grey stone had been used as a fort during the Anglo-Boer War. Slots in the upper walls were spaces to rest a rifle. Tall gum trees with strips of peeling bark grew in the grounds. The small flowers of the gum trees attracted bees and there was a steady hum as the insects collected nectar. Groups of Zulu men and women sat in the shade of the trees talking quietly amongst themselves as they

waited to see the police or the Bantu Affairs Commissioner. For many of them the court house and its cases were a source of entertainment, a social occasion.

The magistrate came out of his office and the Zulu men rose to greet him. 'Nkoos' (Chief) they said. Maqubu's case was called and walked into the court room. The case dragged on for hours. Witnesses tried to infer that Maqubu had fired without warning, but his honesty and the direct way he gave his evidence soon convinced the magistrate. One witness contradicted another, and there was a perceptible change in the attitude of the court officials. Even the local Zulus who came to court for entertainment, stirred in their seats. An old, grey-bearded Zulu shook his head.

Brendan Cullinan, the Natal Parks Board legal adviser, summed up the case in concise sentences and asked for Maqubu's acquittal on the charge of culpable homicide.

The magistrate went out. He returned to declare Maqubu not guilty. The interpreter translated and Maqubu lifted his hand in salute to the magistrate.

'*Nkoos, nkoos!*' he said with deep relief, voicing the Zulu term of respect for their elders.

Later in the year Game Guard Ntoyana, a slender man with a sensitive face from the Ngubeni guard camp near the junction of the rivers, came running into Mpila. He told me that while he was on patrol that morning he and the other guards from his camp had seen a group of twelve poachers. Seven of these poachers were armed, five with .303's and two with .22's. At fifty yards range the poachers opened fire. One shot hit the tree Ntoyana was hiding behind. The guards were hopelessly outnumbered so they scrambled down the steep slopes of Iqaqaleimpisi kranz four hundred feet above the White Umfolozi river. The poachers kept on firing and the guards had to run for their lives.

Nick and Ken Rochat were away so I sent Maqubu out to other camps for reinforcements and left immediately on horseback for Ngubeni camp. I had been ill for the past few days with bad stomach trouble, and the ride was a nightmare. Every half mile I had to get off the horse to defecate

until I was so weak I could hardly climb into the saddle again. Fortunately I was riding behind Johannes, the donkey handler. The donkeys were not fast walkers, and Johannes could keep his eyes open for black rhino.

We passed a herd of twenty waterbuck which stood at the side of the track watching us go by. Usually this would have thrilled me, but that day I just kept riding and praying I would last to Ngubeni camp. When we got there I had to tell the guards I could not go out with them. I lay down in one of the huts and fell asleep at once, waking only at intervals when the gripes were too bad.

I got up in the late afternoon with a mass of pepper ticks crawling over my arms, legs, and chest. They dig their heads in and are hard to locate until the bites itch so much you draw blood scratching them, then the sore often turns septic.

I heard the guards splashing through the river when it was dark. I stood up near the fire and they saw me.

'We've caught one,' they shouted jubilantly, and one of them held up a shotgun.

I felt murderous when Ntoyana said he had been shot at again. The guards had seen the man and three others stalking and shooting reedbuck. One of the poachers had a .303 and another had a shotgun. The guards crept along until they were twenty yards away before they charged. Two poachers ran but the man with the shotgun turned round and fired. The guards took off their hats and showed me tiny holes; it was a miracle none of them had a face full of shot. Before he could reload the guards were on top of him and he was beaten to the ground with the butt of a rifle. He grabbed one of the guards legs, drew a knife and tried to stab, but a kick in the face stunned him temporarily.

The guards removed the knife and were taking off their handcuffs when the poacher came to and grabbed Ntoyana in the genitals. He had to be cracked with a knobstick before he would let go. The others got away.

I looked at the poacher who stood sullenly in the firelight. There was a thin trickle of blood running down his cheek.

'What is your name?' I demanded in Zulu.

'I am an *Mletwa*,' he answered insolently.

One of the guards moved up to hit him but I waved him away.

I told him I understood why he was poaching. Many of his people poached. 'But why do you try to kill my men?' I said.

He looked away.

'This man works for the road grader operator,' Ntoyana said.

Philip, a guard who the following year had half his face blown away by a poacher's bullet, said, 'I gave you meat on Monday, now you come in here and try to steal, and murder a guard. What have we done to you?'

The poacher cleared his throat and spat.

Ntoyana leapt forward and grabbed him by the throat. I jerked him away and said the man was now our prisoner.

We questioned him about his companions; who were they? The firelight flickered on the faces of the guards round me.

'Angasi - I don't know,' the poacher replied.

'Do you think we are that stupid?' Ntoyana said. 'You were two people today and one had a .303 rifle. Who was he?'

'A man,' the poacher said.

I had to restrain the guards again.

'You have tried to kill my guards. Do you know the law can hang you for this?' I said.

'It is thick rope they put about your neck, then you never see the sun again,' Ntoyana said softly, with a twisted smile.

The man looked up into the night sky and shrugged his shoulders. I had to admire his courage. Grilling people was not my line at all, and after four hours questioning I gave up and went to bed.

Late into the night I heard the guards' voices droning monotonously. They were angry at being shot at twice and they were determined to get some information from the prisoner. Bright moonlight filtered through the *nthomboti* trees where the guards had made their kitchen boma. The redbuck the poachers had shot swung silently from one of the dark branches, the blood already black and congealed.

Early in the morning I woke with more stomach cramps.

This time I heard the poacher talking and the guards saying 'Ehe!' and 'Yebo!'

At first light Ntoyana came to me and reported that they had the names of all the men who had carried fire-arms on the two occasions. I looked at him and he laughed quietly.

'No, nkosi, we did not beat him - you can come and look for yourself.'

I gave the man some of my coffee and bread.

I was too weak to move until the afternoon when I climbed on to Cherokee, my horse, and rode across the river to look at the attempted murder sites. We found one of the game guard hats where it had fallen when they fled. The tree Ntoyana had hidden behind was barely three inches thick. The bullet had only just been deflected; a millimetre more and Ntoyana would have been killed. I made sketches, paced out the distance then rode slowly back to Mpila.

The South African police located all the fire-arms and the owners were charged. The poacher with the shotgun got off a charge of attempted murder but was found guilty of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm. For a few months the area was quiet, but poaching trouble started up in another area.

I first saw him in 1952 and old man Foster, who understood the Zulus, said, 'There's a good man.'

Philip Mtetwa was the best man who ever worked on the fenceline. Nothing was too much trouble for him. He would gladly run back a mile to fetch a forgotten pair of pliers, or stay at the camp and make tea, or act as a bearer. It was only in 1958 that he shyly approached me and asked to join the game guard force. I took him on immediately. Tall and slenderly built as he was, he always looked smart in his pressed khaki uniform. He knew bushcraft too, and before long caught an impressive number of poachers, soon qualifying for his laurel wreath, the game guard award for capturing a poacher's rifle. It was always a pleasure to see his handsome smiling face and the pride he took in his work. I looked forward to seeing him on the next pay day. I wanted to promote him to corporal.

But at eight o'clock on the night of the 23 April Game Guards Mzulwini and Msikeni ran twelve miles from Domba camp to report that they had been attacked by poachers and Philip Mtetwa had been shot in the face. George Duby of the South African Tourist Corporation was with me at the time, and I gladly accepted his offer of help.

I gathered a few medical supplies, filled my Land-Rover and made for Domba camp near the junction of the two Umfolozi rivers. The track had deteriorated badly and it took three hours to reach the guard camp. We left the Land-Rover and crossed the White Umfolozi on foot. The two guards guided me to three men huddled round a fire. Philip was lying near them, covered in an army coat. He was in an extremely bad way, half his face a raw wound. He was saturated in blood and moaning for a drink of water. It was obvious that only immediate hospitalization would save his life. I did my best to stop further bleeding then had him carried to the vehicle. He moaned at every jolt on the unimaginably rough track. We made slow time until we reached the main gravel road then I drove over the Black Umfolozi river causeway. The splashing sounds made Philip ask again for water – '*amanzi, amanzi,*' he cried. I stopped and scooped some in a hat, he sucked at the water in dreadful agony. We drove through the darkness up into the Hlabisa hills, and reached the hospital at two o'clock in the morning.

An African nurse asked if the case was serious enough for her to call the doctor. I drew the overcoat back and let her look at Philip. She ran to the phone. Dr Hall, the mission doctor, came into the foyer looking drawn and tired. After his examination he said he did not hold out much hope that Philip would live, but that he would do his best.

Before he left for the operating theatre Philip croaked a request. Game Guard Msikeni leant over him.

'What is it?' I asked.

'Philip asks that his little boy be brought to see him in case he should die.'

I promised to have the youngster sent for at first light.

Dr Hall roused another medical man and they operated until after dawn. They told me that Philip would live but

would be terribly mutilated. One eye had gone as well as most of one ear. They could not tell what damage there was to the brain.

When he was wheeled into a ward, I sat on a chair next to his bed. The part of his face that remained was drained of its usual black glossy healthy look. He breathed slowly with little choking noises in his throat. I held his hand and whispered in Zulu that he was my friend and a man. An hour passed before he came round from the anaesthetic.

He called out a name. I told him Madolo was with him. He stiffened in an attempt to salute then murmured my name, 'Yebo Madolo, yebo Madolo.' I found it hard not to cry.

When we got back to the game reserve the other guards told me what had happened the night before.

On the Wednesday evening a group of poachers slipped across the White Umfolozi river. They waited until it was dark then began shooting in the dense riverine forest at the junction of the two rivers. The game guards heard the shots but there was no hope of finding anyone in that tangle of bush, so they waited until the following morning. Before first light they crossed the river at Domba and went quietly along the game path through the reeds. They climbed the highest point in the southern buffer zone, known as Ciyane. Here they waited.

They had barely settled themselves in the lush red grass when a shot was fired in the game reserve. They knew the main footpath from the reserve came up the Iqaqaleimpisi (Ridge of the Hyena) so, led by their corporal Anias, they ran to the ridge where they planned to ambush the poachers in a narrow defile. It was not until after midday that they saw ten poachers splashing across the Umfolozi river. Some were armed and the others were carrying game meat tied to poles.

The hunters stopped in the southern buffer zone and made a fire. They obviously thought they were safe. The guards could see the smoke rising above the reeds. If they had known how long it would be before the poachers moved they would have sent for reinforcements from the Makamisa camp, but

as the poachers were well armed, they were reluctant to reduce their own numbers.

The shadows of the April afternoon were growing longer when the poachers left their small fire and started up the footpath of the Iqaqaleimpisi. Corporal Anias peered over a boulder and saw that four men were armed, with one .22, one .303, a Martini Henry lever action rifle, and a shotgun. The other six poachers were carrying the meat. Anias noted a reedbuck and a bushbuck among the carcasses, both specially protected animals. Just before the top of the ridge and a short distance from where an attempt was made on Game Guard Ntoyana's life a few months previously, the poachers stopped. They hesitated and spoke hurriedly to one another, then the men with the meat started off in a northerly direction.

The guards stood up and challenged the hunters. The four armed men came forward and the one with a .303 rifle aimed and fired at Game Guard Mdiceni. The bullet hit a rock and ricocheted among the guards. Then Philip Mtetwa shouted a warning, telling them not to be fools. They kept on coming and Philip fired a shot but he had been shaken by the unprovoked attack and his bullet went wide. The poachers ducked into the bush fringing the path and opened fire at random with all their weapons. Philip who was out in the open was shot in the face before he could take cover.

Anias fired back, and this time he meant to kill. The guards kept on firing until the poachers retreated. They could not follow with Philip lying badly wounded in a pool of blood. They helped him down to the river. By now it was dark and Mzulwini and Msikeni ran the twelve miles to Mpila.

Major Curt von Keyserlingk, the District Commandant of Police at Eshowe, came to the actual scene of the shooting so that he could have first hand knowledge of the whole affair. There were not many senior men who would have taken the trouble.

Sergeant Charles Marais of Empangeni, the best detective in Zululand, was assigned to the case. Six days after the incident he sent me a note saying he had arrested all ten poachers. Four firearms were also recovered. Although a

charge of attempted murder was brought against one of the poachers he was found not guilty. This was a hard blow but there could be no dispute with the court.

At the end of my report to Colonel Vincent I said that more bad poaching was expected since the drought had ruined crops. I pleaded again for radio; we could never really combat poaching until we had proper communications. Colonel Vincent wrote persistently to the Postmaster General and eventually got permission for our radio link up. We were equipped with radio before many other civil service departments. It came in time to save the lives of many guards, and it seems impossible that we ever managed without it.

Philip Mtetwa was in hospital for a long time and when he was temporarily released I sent a driver to take him to his kraal to recuperate. Six months passed before we met again. Then one morning on my way to office, a bent figure walked down the path. He stopped a few yards from me and saluted. It was Philip, his face unrecognizable. He greeted me, trying hard to hold himself erect. I asked him how he was and he replied stiffly and correctly. While we stood there other guards and labourers passed us, and quietly greeted him, 'Sabona Mtetwa,' (I see you Mtetwa).

Philip replied softly each time, 'Yebo,' (Yes, I see you too).

We walked to my office and he told me of the continuous pain, the throbbing headaches and the constant dizzy spells. He could not concentrate and kept on pathetically apologizing for his inability to hear properly. It was a blazing hot day but he kept his heavy khaki overcoat on, because he felt cold. He was obviously troubled by something else and I pressed him gently to tell me what it was.

Would I continue to employ him as a guard? he asked. He needed the money to feed and educate his son.

I explained that there was no need to worry, that he had a lifetime of service, that he was one of us and we would always look after him. He sobbed quietly.

It was eighteen months before he could work again. He had a job on the wilderness trails on full game guard salary. He did his work faithfully and with the old conscientiousness, but there were days when he had bad spells. The blast from the

bullet had affected part of his brain, but he insisted on working for another nine years. Hundreds of wilderness trailers met this slim, quiet man who was always courteous. He would sit huddled near the burning nthombothi logs and talk without malice of the men who shot and disfigured him for life.

In early 1970 he asked me diffidently whether he could now go on pension. With the courage and loyalty of men like Philip Mtetwa, I thought, the wilderness of Umfolozi Game Reserve would always be safe.

Chapter 15

Squatters

THE first squatters moved into the western buffer zone in October 1944. Two huts were built near the Hlungwana river. I reported this immediately to the magistrate. He said he could do nothing because the land was under the control of the Lands Department. Colonel Vincent took the matter up with the Lands Department in Pietermaritzburg but was told that the Bantu Affairs Department was responsible – the usual departmental buck passing. For us it was the beginning of a long struggle, with the future of Umfolozi Game Reserve and the white rhino in the balance.

With the coming of the squatters, poaching increased a hundred fold. The game guard picquet stationed at Madhilozi (The Place of the Spirits) reported that a group of thirty men had been hunting along the Mtunzini hills. They wiped out an entire herd of mountain reedbuck.

Our relations with most magistrates and some members of the junior ranks of the police were not good in those early days. They considered our cases trivial and, after the game extermination campaigns, they were sceptical about our protective activities. The public prosecutors said our guards gave poor evidence. This was true at times, but mistakes occurred through incorrect or slovenly interpretation by

African court interpreters, who were hostile to conservation. They made the guards look untruthful and stupid and this irritated the magistrate, who then imposed fines which were ridiculously low, such as R1 or one week for serious offences.

By the early part of 1956 the whole west bank of the Hlungwana river was occupied and fields had encroached onto the eastern side. The position worsened because some officials turned a blind eye to the infiltration. So the squatters continued to pour in with their cattle. The land west of Mtunzini hill deteriorated quickly. The squatters chopped down trees, ploughed up and down hills, and planted mealies (maize) and kaffir corn.

When I remonstrated with one magistrate he acidly replied, 'But good God, man, these people have to eat.'

'Quite right,' I replied. 'But their grandchildren will be eating stones if you don't take the trouble to understand land management principles.'

Our interest was not altruistic. We knew that when crops failed in the inevitable drought, poachers would stream into the reserve. In fact the future of the game reserves was bound up with the way the Bantu Affairs Department tackled its urgent land management problems. In some of the tribal areas adjoining the game reserve, soil erosion and overstocking were obvious. Officials would gloss over this, but should a rhino or a hippo wander through a mealie field, these same men would create an uproar.

Some magistrates were aware of the serious land problem, and they tried to get more staff to teach the tribesmen contour ploughing and soil conservation methods. It was a losing battle. Every year more cattle and goats were brought into the area and tons of valuable topsoil went down the Umfolozi rivers to the sea. There was very little chance of ever putting it right until there was a complete change in land management.

In 1956 it was already a proven fact that lowveld areas next to the game reserve could, in terms of game, provide more protein than cattle. But this was not acknowledged. In fact most Bantu Affairs Department officials laughed loudly when I suggested a tribal hunting area next to the game

reserve, yet such an area would have been an outlet for the hunting instincts of the tribesmen and would have at the same time provided valuable protein. It could have been continually restocked by the overflow of game from the reserves. Instead, squatters were allowed to fill the vacuum.

I had much sympathy for many of the squatters who were victims of forces which they did not understand. Overpopulation on farms and some badly eroded African tribal lands incapable of carrying more people caused the exodus. Then, too, they were being exploited by their own people who charged exorbitant sums for permission to squat in other tribal areas. It was a sad, serious, and complex question, but my duty was clear. I had to try to save the last white rhino habitat from being overrun by human beings and their stock.

We very nearly lost the fight because of the weight of numbers against us. In no time two-thirds of the former southern and western buffer zones was inhabited by the squatters, a solid phalanx of humanity circling the last sanctuary of the white rhinoceros.

I could foresee great bitterness which in the end could erupt into violence, but officialdom as always followed the line of least resistance. The root cause – overpopulation – was overlooked because it was expedient to do so.

I had been away for two years. On the morning of my return in May 1958 I looked out from the house and saw that the squatters had now reached the Mandhlakazi footpath boundary. More squatters came in daily, encouraged by some chiefs, and they arrived on foot, by bicycle, car and bus. Some came from Msinga, an area of tribal unrest even when Natal was a British Colony. These warlike people infiltrated the ranks of the local tribesmen and had their own aggressive indunas appointed.

There had been drastic changes to the veld. Where once redgrass stretched for miles there was now soil erosion. Trees were being hacked down and livestock grazed in the game reserve.

The years went by. We watched the land daily and saw in the changing ecological conditions a clear warning that bad land management and squatter explosion meant the loss of valuable top soil.

To have the squatters removed was a continuous struggle. Colonel Vincent tried to get various senior officials to take action and Mr Douglas Mitchell, M.P., pursued the matter in Capetown with cabinet ministers. I never lost an opportunity of lobbying anyone who would listen to me. Many times I stressed to Bantu Affairs Department men that it was their responsibility to see that the land was properly cared for, but they were so wrapped up in the tribal structures and personal problems of the African that they could not see the deterioration in the land.

In December 1960 I met the magistrate from Mahlabatini and a representative from the Department of Lands. It had taken nearly two years of phoning, writing, and personal visits to get people to agree to meet and view the problem *in situ*. We stood on the slopes of Mtunzini hill and looked at the squatter huts which were still springing up like mushrooms after rain. New lands were being ploughed in the heart of the rhino range. Two days before I had come across a group of squatters a mile inside the 1897 boundary of the game reserve. I chased them out at the point of a gun.

This had been reported to the magistrate and he now took me to task. Indecision, I said, was going to cause endless trouble and possible bloodshed. I explained that informers had told us that the local chief was accepting bribes and allowing more warlike tribesmen from the Msinga district into the area. Our game guards had been threatened and told that it would take not one, but five hundred policemen to move the squatters. There were rumours of a hunt that would wipe out every wild animal on the Ukuku ridge. It was said that the hunters would storm into the game reserve and burn down the Thobothî guard camp and rangers post. It was vital that the boundaries of the game reserve be resolved. Privately both officials agreed with me but each blamed the other department for the indecision. It had been this way since 1955.

As I drove back towards Mpila camp I saw a pair of white rhino bulls grazing near a hut. Some dogs appeared and the rhino rushed across the boundary road into the game reserve. Minutes later a herd of cattle came pouring over the skyline near Ntaba-amanini. I wondered how many were diseased.

The situation deteriorated even further when squatters penetrated deep into the southern buffer zone. Huts were built on Mdiindini fist below Mpila camp. I rode out with Owen Letley one morning to see the infiltration. It looked hopeless. We rode to the Mahlabamvu ridge and saw huts going up all over the country. Senior Game Guard Mzwabantu Masuku rode with us and he pointed out cane knife marks on trees indicating the beginning of a kraal site. Some tribesmen had crossed the White Umfolozi river and staked out areas inside the reserve at Dadethu pan.

To us the issue was clear. Other land had to be made available for the squatters and part of the buffer strips must be proclaimed game reserve if Umfolozi was to survive. Mdiindini fist was like a dagger pointing into the heart of the Umfolozi Reserve. Future control was impossible if the squatters occupied it.

On one occasion Owen and I heard chopping in the Maunzi bush. We found two squatters cutting hut poles. They were miserable looking, unfortunate men, pushed out of their homes, and they were hostile and refused to listen when we told them to move out.

We rode away from them. I wondered desperately what to do. I felt sick and depressed about the whole business, worse than I had ever been. The guards were depressed too, and moved listlessly ahead of us. Only Mzwabantu Masuku, Nick's head game guard, looked expectant. He seemed to be hoping I would be able to do something.

We rode for miles. Everywhere it was the same story: squatters moving in.

'We can't sit back and let this happen,' Owen said despondently that night.

We camped on the White Umfolozi sands at Makamisa. We sat for hours staring into the campfire as the guards talked quietly about the day's events.

'Surely if we had some sort of demarcation we could keep these people on the other side of the line,' Owen said.

So was born the idea of putting in a road. There could be little departmental objection and it would give us a breathing spell.

We saddled up early next morning and rode back to Mpila camp. The road and a newspaper campaign might have results I thought, and I decided to see Colonel Vincent who was at Lake St Lucia with some VIP's. He appreciated how urgent it was. We got in touch with the *Natal Mercury* who sent one of their best reporters up the following day. The Colonel agreed to phone Major von Keyserlingk and ask him to try to prevent further infiltration.

'Have no fear,' the Colonel said reassuringly. 'We will leave no stone unturned to bring attention to this business.'

I returned to Umfolozi feeling much happier.

On the tenth day of July the Roads Maintenance Officer began the new road. On the eleventh Nick Steele reported over the radio that the road from Mfuyeni stream to the junction of the Umfolozis at Siyembeni had been completed and the squatters were moving south of the road. A group of squatters had asked the guards why the road was being graded. The guards said the army was coming to throw them out. It was effective propaganda.

The newspapers were making the most of the situation and the *Christian Science Monitor* representative came for a story. 'History Corners the White Rhino' appeared in his paper on 10 August 1961, and it was one of the fairest newspaper articles that had appeared on the whole problem.

I was called to Pietermaritzburg by Colonel Vincent who told me that negotiations were under way with government officials and that we would be getting only a portion of the western and southern state owned lands.

'If they don't act with the squatters, there will be even less, I suppose,' the Colonel said.

While we were talking Norman Deane phoned from Hlulhuwe Game Reserve. There had been four black rhino deaths and he suspected anthrax. Later some paralysed nyala

and crows were brought in and there was a suspicion that the waterholes had been poisoned.

'And some people think we have no problems,' the Colonel said.

This bad news upset our morning and we discussed it until Mr Douglas Mitchell arrived. He was taking up the squatter question with the Minister of Bantu Affairs, and he wanted more information from the Colonel.

On 8 September 1961 I noted in my diary, 'There is a smell of drought and trouble in the air.' Nick had called up in the morning to say that squatters were once again pouring into the southern buffer zone. 'So far they haven't crossed our road but one tin shack is being built right on it,' he said.

I told Nick to chase them off in any way he could, before they did any more building. We were barely holding our own, and the future didn't look good.

In January 1961 Toni Harthoorn wrote saying that the Uganda Game Department intended moving the last of the northern race of white rhino from the West Nile district – the old Lado Enclave – to the Murchison Falls National Park. Poaching in the white rhino area was so bad the Game Department realized that if something was not done quickly, the Uganda rhino would be wiped out. Together with the National Parks Service they planned to translocate twenty white rhino. Professional game trappers had been asked to undertake the work in exchange for permission to capture young elephant in West Nile and hippo at Queen Elizabeth Park. Toni suggested I came up and watched them at work. 'You'll learn a lot about crating and loading,' he said.

I flew to Nairobi then to Entebbe where I was met by John Lock, a colleague of Toni Harthoorn. Toni drove me north to Lomunga camp.

It was here that I met Ken Randall and Pat O'Connell, two professional game capture men. I spent three weeks with them in the field and gained much valuable information. Their experience of loading, crating and transporting animals could hardly be improved upon, but the capture of the rhino with ropes was an archaic method. The use of drugs would have to substitute this old method, or we would

never be able to capture the quantity of rhino we needed to.

When I returned from Uganda troubles awaited me; more squatters had come into the western and southern buffer zones and there were rumours of a big raid that was going to sweep right to Thobothi and Mbuzane camps.

All through the month we heard of a big hunt that was going to take place in the western buffer zone and penetrate into the game reserve. Guards were warned that anyone trying to stop the hunt would be dealt with.

On 5 May Owen Letley radioed me urgently. He had just received news from an informer that the poaching mob would be hunting the following day, 'Three hundred of them,' he said.

That afternoon a message came from the South African police at Mahlabatini. We must expect trouble the following day, they said. They would be arriving at nine o'clock.

We had to prepare. I phoned Paul Dutton at Charters Creek and told him to bring John Tinley to Umfolozi Game Reserve. Then I got in touch with the Chief Conservator, Peter Potter, and asked that Bob Murray, one other ranger, and three armed guards each with twenty rounds of ammunition be sent to Umfolozi immediately. I spoke to Hugh Dent, the Wilderness Trails Officer, and asked him to come with me, as it looked serious, and it might be vital to have a fluent Zulu linguist with us. Hugh made arrangements to hand over his wilderness trail to John Clark.

At nine o'clock I gave out ammunition to game guards and supervised the loading of the Land-Rovers.

Paul Dutton, John Tinley, Bob Murray and Garth Carpenter arrived at half past nine. I explained everything to them, emphasizing the need for restraint and discipline amongst the guards. We had to make it clear that our aim was to prevent trouble, not to cause it.

We left for the Madhlozi guard camp on the western edge of the game reserve at ten o'clock, and drove without lights from the Mpafa stream. A jackal and two white rhino crossed the road and a nightjar appropriately chanted its 'Good Lord deliver us' dirge.

As we offloaded our bedrolls at the guard camp there was

a strong smell of maize meal, boiling coffee, and woodsmoke. It brought back memories. In 1953 I had camped here because of the mviti tree (*Boscia albitrunca*). The guards had taught me how to make coffee from its roots, a good standby for a young bachelor. Later, in 1955, I had established the game guard camp. This was the heart of the white rhino range and there had been no protection along the seventeen mile western boundary. It became our taking off point when we patrolled the western buffer zone.

We sat round the fire for a while and spoke to the guards of the Madhlozi camp. They had heard about the impending raid from some women who were cutting grass near the western tourist road.

We turned in early. There was going to be a long day ahead.

At four o'clock in the morning of 6 May I sent Graham Thomson and an armed guard to the top of Sokwezela hill with a portable radio. They were to report every quarter-hour.

At half past five we paraded the game guards. We told them that no shot was to be fired, even at a dog, until they were given an order. Game Guard Gqakaza Nthombela, a short, well-built man, gazed at me under his heavy eyelids and smiled slowly. Like his famous relative Maqubu Nthombela, he was a tough person.

'I pity anyone who gets in his way,' Paul Dutton said.

At six o'clock Peter Potter flew over Madhlozi camp in a light aircraft with Boet Badenhorst, a local sugar farmer. I spoke to him on the radio.

'We're over Ukuku now,' Peter Potter said. 'But there's no gathering anywhere.'

He contacted control at Mpila a little later – he had just seen six tribesmen on the south bank of the Black Umfolozi. Then his radio went dead.

At eight o'clock Graham Thomson on Sokwezela hill reported that two shots had been fired in the Mcetshwanene area near the Black Umfolozi river. We went by Land-Rover to a ridge overlooking the area. We stopped to listen and soon heard a .303 rifle shot.

'So they've got rifles too,' John Tinley grunted.

Another shot went off just north of us.

'Ngebe – a shotgun,' Maqubu said.

At nine o'clock six tribesmen appeared on the hill opposite us, moving slowly northwards.

Fifteen minutes later Graham Thomson's voice crackled over the radio. 'I can see a group coming down the Ukuku ridge,' he said.

Bob Murray pointed them out. There were thirty-seven.

A five-minute silence was broken by more shotgun blasts and we saw over fifty men moving slowly along a ravine northwards. It looked worse than I had expected.

'This doesn't look too good,' Paul Dutton said calmly.

I looked at the men around me, these rangers and guards. God forbid that any of them should get hurt.

'Norman Deane will be cursing that he wasn't here today,' Bob Murray said. 'So will Nick Steele.'

'There's still plenty of time,' I said. 'Nick will be here this afternoon.'

Head Constable van Zyl of the South African police at Mahlabatini joined us at half past nine. I was very pleased to see him. We had first met some years ago at Ndumu when I was ranger in charge of the game reserve. He was one of the fairest policemen I had met, always restrained, and the Zulus respected him for his bearing and manner. I explained what had happened so far, then pointed out the various poaching parties.

Soon Graham Thomson was on the air. More men had been seen moving down the Ukuku hills. Owen Letley and Adriaan Erasmus went forward two hundred yards to a high vantage point. Just after ten o'clock we heard more shots. A lone man on horseback came down the proposed boundary ridge.

'That must be the Chief,' Hugh Dent said, pointing.

Almost at once four tribesmen came out of a patch of bush. Two were armed with rifles. Five minutes later we saw two more armed Africans. The noise of massing men was on the increase. Dogs began barking and there was a scream.

'Mpunzi – a grey duiker,' Maqubu said.

'I think we had better send a message to the District Commandant at Eshowe and to the Hlabisa police,' van Zyl said.

I called up the radio operator at Mpila from my Land-Rover and asked him to send for John Kinloch, the imperturbable camp superintendent. Van Zyl dictated his message slowly. John Kinloch repeated each line.

'To District Commandant, Eshowe. One hundred and fifty Bantu near Black Umfolozi in western crown lands. Bantu are approaching us. Seven shots have been fired at game by Bantu hunters. We have eight white rangers, two white South African police, two Bantu South African police constables, four revolvers, and one steno gun. We are watching the situation. They are now one point five miles from us. Would request police be on standby but no assistance required yet.'

Another message was sent to the Hlabisa police:

'Please come immediately fully armed to Umfolozi Game Reserve.'

The sergeant at Hlabisa was out in the Land-Rover and was not expected back until the afternoon. So the Mtubatuba police were contacted and they promised to send out a party as soon as possible.

While these messages were being passed, Peter Potter arrived by vehicle. He had landed at Mtubatuba when the radio gave in. He was given a rifle and joined the party.

By eleven o'clock the early morning mists had gone and a heat haze was spreading over the hills. Game guards took their dark khaki overcoats off and wrapped them into bundles. Some smoked while others chatted and laughed. Maqubu sat a little apart, staring towards the dry hills already changing to their winter colours.

'What do you think, Maqubu?' John Tinley asked.

'It can be very bad,' he said flatly. 'These people want trouble and will not listen today.'

Van Zyl said, 'Let's move down the road, get onto that Mcetshwanene track and try to arrest some of these people.'

Five minutes later we were a few hundred yards away from the mob. We parked on a slight slope in a bad section of the road enclosed by thick bush.

'This is unhealthy,' Paul Dutton commented dryly.

Poachers' dogs were running round near us. I nodded to Game Guard Gqakaza and he shot two with his .303. There was a sudden hush, then a cry rose from the main mob. Three men, one carrying a bushbuck doe with its throat cut, passed close to us.

'Shout to them to come here,' I said to Hugh Dent.

Hugh called to them but they ignored him and ran to the main group in the bush. By this time rangers, game guards and police were all out of the vehicles and milling around. If we were going to be attacked we were in a vulnerable position.

The poachers began chanting and stamping their feet, and there were loud cries of '*ozana ngamandhla*' (gather in strength). Whistles blew and the chanting grew louder. I had a quick discussion with Peter Potter and van Zyl, and we decided to withdraw as we could be attacked at any minute.

Our new position was unsatisfactory, but better. We formed the vehicles into a rough laager with the men in the hollow space. But I knew we could not repel the poachers if they attacked us in a body: they were hidden from us in the ravine below by the dense bush which lay sixty yards beyond our chosen flat piece of ground.

The mob had grown to two hundred or more and the noise was rising. The slight north wind which had been blowing earlier had stopped, so sound carried far and we could hear their threats. I was very worried; worried for the game reserve and the adverse publicity which could wreck years of hard work; worried because I felt lives lay in the balance of a decision.

Our position was not at all safe and we had made no plan about when to open fire. Peter Potter and I talked to Head Constable van Zyl and we quickly agreed we would fire only if we were attacked in force.

By now the chanting of the mob had deepened and they were so close to us we could hear clearly the Zulu phrase, 'The burning hills, the smoking fires; we defeat them by being fully armed,' repeated again and again. This was like Isandhlawana. These men were worked up to kill.

'Let's get to another position and wait for reinforcements,' van Zyl said.

The familiar phrase was reassuring, and we moved to just below Sokwezela hill where we collected Graham Thomson from his observation post.

Van Zyl sent a message to the District Commandant, Major von Keyserlingk, at Eshowe: 'We're about to be attacked by two hundred plus Bantu. Have withdrawn to another position.'

Peter Potter suggested he should go back to Mtubatuba and fly over the area again with Boet Badenhorst. I agreed, and this move probably saved our lives.

At a quarter past one the Mtubatuba police – three Europeans and some Zulu constables – arrived. Nick Steele returned from leave and joined us immediately. It was good to see him.

Soon after two o'clock we had a radio message from Mpila to say that the Hlabisa police were on their way, and that Peter Potter and Boet Badenhorst were about to take off.

I heard more rifle shots and the thump of a bullet striking a body. A lot of game was being killed. Then we heard the yelping of dogs in full chase. I searched the nearby hills with binoculars and picked up at least ten dogs streaking after a kudu bull. The kudu ran full tilt along a ridge, laying its horns back as it ran beneath thorn trees. Some poachers burst out of the bush. One aimed, and seconds later came the report. The kudu turned east, making for the game reserve. One lean, greyhound type dog had kept up with it. I fired at the dog, using a .375 telescopic sight. The bullet whacked the ground in front of it, so that it veered off and the kudu disappeared into the bush.

At half past three the light plane flew overhead and I spoke to Peter Potter on the radio.

'The poachers are breaking up and moving off,' he said.

I asked him to get the pilot to dive on the biggest group to show us their position.

The light plane banked steeply and dived towards a patch of bush, swooped up then dived at the same spot. Rangers, police, and game guards ran in the direction of the bush.

'There's a huge mob now,' Peter Potter shouted anxiously, his voice fading in the howling of the aeroplane.

By the time I had finished speaking to him, some men were over a mile ahead. I ran after them but going up the steep hill along a narrow footpath soon tired me. I caught up with Sergeant Spammer of the Mahlabatini police who had run out of breath and was resting at the foot of Mcetshawanene hill. Together we hastily searched nearby squatter kraals; hardly one did not contain at least half a dozen game skins, mostly of mountain reedbuck, one of the rarest antelope in Zululand.

We heard the aircraft zooming and its engines whining in a dive; it was concentrating on one spot. Sergeant Spammer and I climbed to the top of Mcetshawanene and in the distance, on the slopes of Ukuku hills, we could see a big crowd of Zulus with some guards and rangers near them. The plane was sweeping low over the crowd, again and again. It was obvious that they were doing their best to break up the dangerous mob.

I remembered an old track leading to the ridge where the Zulus and our men were, so Sergeant Spammer and I ran back to the Land-Rovers. It was a mile-long, exhausting run, but we had to join our people on the hill. Some policemen who had not been able to keep up with the younger rangers had also returned to the Land-Rovers. I gathered everyone together and we raced down the Black Umfolozi track, round the back of Mcetshawanene hill and up the southern ridge of Ukuku, somehow without knocking out the sump or breaking a spring.

We could find only a few stragglers. Inwardly I had a horrible fear that our men on top of the hill had been slaughtered that afternoon. We searched and shouted, and fired shots into the air, but there was no answering sound to break the stillness. Any moment I expected to stumble on a heap of bodies. Darkness was coming swiftly. I strained to hear a human shout or whisper, but only a jackal screamed. It was too dark to search any more, and we stumbled back to the Land-Rover. Suddenly, out of a nearby bush, a lone Zulu broke and ran. I could just see his tall, lithe body, naked

except for his bechu and bead bracelets, leaping, jumping, and running over boulders into the gloom. We shouted at him, hopelessly.

In the darkness it took nearly an hour to get down the track we had sped up earlier. We met Graham Thomson and Maqubu, who had come to call us. Everyone had returned safely. Nick Steele told me that he, Hugh Dent, Garth Carpenter, a European police constable, and some guards led by Maqubu, had caught up with the main mob of poachers.

'We saw we were in a dangerous situation,' Nick said. 'One wrong move and there would have been a lot of killing. I called Hugh Dent forward and we handed our rifles to someone to hold and walked forward. The Chief saw us and did the same thing. The Chief said they had no intention of letting themselves be arrested.'

While they were talking Owen Letley came forward and said that a police party under Major von Keyserlingk was on its way. Owen suggested that the mob sat down and awaited their coming. But the mob would have none of this. The plane kept swooping overhead, and this probably prevented a massacre. Nick's and Hugh's bravery in going forward unarmed also made a great impression on the crowd.

Later Maqubu told me, 'When our two white men went forward, I slipped a bullet into the breech of my rifle. If anyone had lifted a hand, I would have shot the Chief dead and then kept shooting until I was killed.'

Major von Keyserlingk, one of South Africa's finest policemen, arrived later that evening with a strong force of South African policemen. His father was a policeman, first in the Natal Colonial police and subsequently in the South African police. Major von Keyserlingk had served with distinction in the 1939-45 War, and was respected by the black and the white people of Zululand. He decided to have a show of force in the area.

Two days later Head Constable van Zyl spoke to me on the radio. He said they had caught forty men and taken possession of four fire-arms, many assegais, and much game meat and skins. He asked me to contact the Bantu Affairs Commis-

sioner at Mahlabatini and ask for a three-ton lorry to be sent to a nearby dipping tank to collect the prisoners.

The Commissioner was horrified. He had had enough of this trouble over the crown lands, he said. He asked that I stress the urgency of settling the crown lands affair.

'We have been doing that for nine years,' I said.

The massed raid made its impact in official circles and it was at last realized that the situation was getting out of hand. Something had to be done to settle the boundary question.

Another year passed before it was settled, and then the tribesmen got three-quarters of the available land. But the quarter allocated to the game reserve enabled us to put up one of the finest game-proof fences in the world.

But this is running ahead of the story.

My report to Colonel Vincent ended: 'With the extremely important high density rhino range bordering the trouble areas, indescribable havoc would be caused if a mob as large as Saturday's actually penetrated the game reserve.'

On 26 June 1962 a big force of police and military moved into the western area of the Umfolozi Game Reserve to begin the removal of the squatters who were now five thousand strong. High ranking police, military, Lands and Bantu Affairs Departmental personnel directed the removal. Curt von Keyserlingk, now a Lieutenant-Colonel, was in charge of the field forces. The Zulus knew and respected him and when he warned them that any violence would not be tolerated, all opposition crumbled away.

That night a long convoy of police and army vehicles rumbled through the reserve and the next day huts next to our boundary were demolished and the people removed to a settlement on the Ukuku hills. It was the end of the squatter problem we had struggled against for nearly six years.

The ridge of Mtunzini hill, part of Unoma, and the Ukuku were added to the Umfolozi Game Reserve and later proclaimed, in area only ten thousand acres, but a vital part of the rhino range. While squatters dominated the heights the guards could never go out on patrol without being seen. A week after everyone had gone I saw a rhino

cow and four mountain reedbuck feeding on the skyline of Mtunzini, safely in the reserve.

This sight alone was sufficient reward for all the talking, writing letters and lobbying people, the countless dinners we had given, trying to persuade persons of varying influence how important the western and southern buffer zones were to the saving of the white rhino and Umfolozi Game Reserve.

As the mountain reedbuck, their russet colouring blending so perfectly with the landscape, stalked along the path, I saw before me the long parade of men I had spoken to. The petty politicians – some who said that soil erosion was God's will and if the rhino became extinct it did not matter. The officials from Government departments in the flush of liquor making vain promises and others cruelly taunting us with threats of taking all the land away from the game. I experienced again the violent anger repressed into a smile and offers of more wine, of biltong or of views to be seen, whereas all the while I wanted to smash my fist into their miserable uncomprehending faces, grab them by the throat and shake some sense into their thick heads; tell them how I had seen rangers work day and night, prepared to give their lives to the cause of the Umfolozi Game Reserve and the white rhino, prepared to die for a piece of land they could never own, prepared to be maimed or blinded, not for a pittance of a salary but for love.

Well, dedication and honesty of purpose had paid off. We now had just enough land to ensure the survival of the game reserve. In an emotional gesture I saluted the reedbuck and the rhino and said aloud we had done our best for them – it might have been silly but it made me feel happy.

A little while later I sent Nick Steele a copy of Proclamation No. 53 of 1962, the official legislation entrusting the land to our care. A game guard in a clean khaki uniform and mounted on a well-groomed horse took him the document in a pouch.

Nick sent a note back: 'I can hardly bring myself to believe that after years of the most terrible suspense that this land and its wild life are safe in the hands of conservation.'

Repopulating the Kruger Park

THE capture of rhino for Kruger Park was due to start on 3 October. It would be an historic occasion.

The last white rhino in the Kruger Park had been shot in 1896 and for the past forty years there had been talk of re-establishing a herd. The American scientist, Dr Herbert Lang, recommended in a report to the South African Government in 1925 that two separate colonies be transferred to the Kruger National Park, but advised that 'the Zululand troops should not be weakened or even frightened, yet enough rhinoceroses should be transferred for breeding purposes'.

Various capture methods such as nets and pits were considered. Nothing came of the suggestions and as time passed, they were deliberately forgotten. The Natal Provincial Administration had realized that the white rhino was a trump card in preventing any deproclamation of Umfolozi Game Reserve.

In the 1940's two young white rhino – Zuluana and Dengezi – were caught with ropes and taken to the Pretoria Zoo, otherwise no white rhino had left Umfolozi Game Reserve.

Among some of the staff there was still a lingering fear that if the white rhino were taken to Kruger Park our game reserve would be lost. I pointed out that the publicity following the capture of rhino would forever ensure the survival of Umfolozi Game Reserve, as it would be regarded as a reservoir for restocking all former white rhino habitats from the Cape to the Zambezi. The four going to the Kruger Park were only the beginning, but it was important that they arrived alive, as it was the first public demonstration of translocation.

The distance to the Kruger Park was over three hundred miles so I decided to catch the rhino, tame them down in the bomas then crate and transport them by truck.

But first I had to select a site and build the bomas.

One afternoon when the white blossomed *Acacia gerrardi* were coming into flower and their lovely scent hung in the air, I drove slowly round the game reserve wondering where to establish the bomas.

Water was a problem. We couldn't build them too near either of the rivers for fear of floods, and it was bitterly cold in the river valleys on winter nights. But I soon found the site I wanted. It was near enough to Mdindini to cart water from the White Umfolozi river and within sight and sound of my home. John Clark ruefully said that I had put the bomas where I could watch him through my binoculars.

Ranger Adriaan Erasmus started work on the bomas the following day. A gang of Zulu labourers went out into the reserve and cut thick nthombothi poles, the wood least affected by termites. Another gang went to the Black Umfolozi river to cut loads of reeds.

The pens were thirty feet square with one gateway each. Poles were placed close together in a trench two and a half feet deep and wired at the top with a cross member to stop them from parting when a rhino pushed against them.

From my office I could hear the shouts of the men and the stamping of earth as the poles were put into position. Maqubu came in later and together we watched the progress from the top of the hill. Adriaan Erasmus was stripped to the waist working alongside the gang who chanted as they dragged the heavy poles into position. The clanging of a cane knife echoed up the hill. I told Maqubu that the day would come when our rhino would go all over the world.

'How will they get there?' he asked, smiling, his head cocked to one side.

'By boat,' I replied.

He laughed and said what would the rhino eat on the water because they had to have food, even I must know that. I explained that the boats could carry enough grass for

months if necessary. Maqubu covered his mouth with his hand, Zulu fashion, and looked dubious.

It was overcast and chilly on the morning we left for the western section of the game reserve. The white rhino stayed out on the plains feeding on this sort of day and we soon found a group below the slopes of Mtunzini. Three bulls walked southwards following the line of the old Mandhlagazi foot-path.

'If you get one of those, let's name it Mandhlagazi in honour of the old tribe,' said Nick.

The approach was easy and the dart hit the young bull squarely in the triceps. It stood for a moment then headed east at a canter. The horsemen followed but Owen went a little too close and the rhino stopped, swung round and lunged at his horse. Owen cantered away casually and the rhino ran off again.

I watched it slowing down as the drug began taking effect. Its steps became shorter and its head jerked from left to right, then its back legs splayed and it stopped.

Four pied crows fluttered on to its back and pecked near the dart wound. They flew off when another mature bull came out of the Madhlozi stream and walked up to the darted rhino. We thought we were going to see a territorial fight, but the darted rhino merely leant against the other bull for a few moments, then dropped. We drove up and Nick said, 'That was the easiest chase we've had.'

We moved forward shouting loudly to drive the other bull away. John Clark quickly tied a rope to Mandhlagazi's hind legs but he got up and ran thirty yards, dragging John behind. Five minutes later he went down properly. We measured him and injected procaine and sodium penicillin while the lorry came up with the crate. At six o'clock we triumphantly deposited him at the bomas. John Clark slept the night in his Land-Rover in front of the pens.

With Mandhlagazi safely deposited in the bomas, our capture techniques improved, we were ready to make sure that the capture of rhino for Kruger Park got maximum publicity.

The press arrived later and Sven Persson and Jimmy Anderson, the South African Tourist Corporation men, came for more film material. It was almost a gala occasion as we left in a fleet of vehicles early the following day.

'Might as well have a little bit of glory while we can,' I said to Nick.

'It's like a circus. I wonder how many people are hoping to get a photograph of you being crushed,' Nick replied gloomily.

The resultant publicity, which reached even the *London Times*, put Umfolozi Game Reserve on the map, but we soon learned to forget about everyone around us and concentrate on the work.

We went out to the Madhlozi area again and I stalked a young female on foot. News photographers followed, and Arthur Bowland of the *Natal Mercury* hid under a bush and got an outstanding picture of the dart in flight, but the dart, by some incredible coincidence, landed in the sole of the animal's foot. I ran back to the Land-Rover and John Page hurriedly mixed more drugs and filled a dart. I carefully stalked the same rhino, moving the last twenty yards on my belly. This time the dart whacked into the shoulder. There was no immediate reaction but the rhino, perturbed by the Land-Rover and the hubbub of voices, ran over a mile and joined a cow and a young calf.

We stalked her with a rope in our hands but six people moving through the bush at the same time make a lot of noise, and she moved nervously. I slipped the rope round her right leg and was about to wind it round the other when a camera clicked. This was enough to set her off again. The rope tangled round my leg and I was dragged on my backside until Nick and Maqubu came to help. Then Owen darted in and grabbed the rope too. But our combined strength was not enough to hold Mpila, as she was already named by Maqubu, who ignored our English names. She dragged us through a thorn bush, ripping off half my shirt. Then she turned slightly and I saw bits of *Panicum* and *Urochloa* grass drop from her lips. I tried to point this out to Owen who was keen on grasses, but as I opened my mouth

she kicked some sand into it. By this time my eyes were so full of dust that I could hardly see where we were being pulled.

More labourers raced up and Maqubu in his thick army overcoat, his hat over his eyes, shouted orders. Several minutes and five hundred yards later we managed to get the rope round a tree, but Mpila still showed fight and John Clark had to rope her front legs too. She tried to rise repeatedly but we pushed her head down by her fourteen and a half inch horn. Eventually she gave in and we pulled the dart out.

We had her tethered. The cameramen joined us. Nick nudged me and said, 'Look at Maqubu, he's pulling his hat straight, he's also got the camera fever!'

The old man was making sure he was presentable.

The lorry backed up and the driver, who was nervous with all the pressmen and cameras about, nearly dropped the crate on Mpila. We put the crate in position and I gave her ten c.c. of antidote intravenously. She rose like a prima donna and gracefully walked into the crate. Even the newsmen were impressed by the performance.

By half past three we had the crate at the second boma. Mpila lay quietly on her brisket and did not move until I had injected another ten c.c. of antidote intramuscularly. Once she was in the pen there was very little fighting. She charged us twice, banged her head then lay down and fell asleep, her ears flicking slowly.

John Clark bedded down in his Land-Rover again but was woken in the middle of the night by bellowing and thumping in Mandhlagazi's pen. He bent down in the darkness and shone a torch between a gap in the poles. All he saw was a large navel, and was nearly brained by one of Mandhlagazi's front feet. The rhino was trying to climb out of his pen and stood with his front legs on top of the gate pole. Having reached so far he was afraid of going further but was reluctant to return to the pen when escape was so near. John Clark picked up a stick and gave him a gentle tap on the nose. Mandhlagazi dropped back and fell into his waterhole, a shallow trough in the ground.

THE WHITE RHINO SAGA

Thinking the rhino might be hungry John dropped a bundle of succulent green *Panicum* grass over the poles. Mandhlagazi hooked the grass before it landed, spread it all over the pen and sent some of it back over the gate on to John's head. So it went on all night. John arrived tired and haggard at the capture point next morning. We listened to his description of Mandhlagazi's goings on.

'I tell you, there's a big difference between those two rhino,' John said.

'Well, they are male and female,' Owen said laughing.

'That's not the point,' John said heatedly. 'Each rhino has unmistakable characteristics. Mandhlagazi is put off by the constant attempts to try and get him to eat, and I think he will only eat in the dead of night when he isn't disturbed.'

I went down to the two rhinos in the bomas. They had recovered fully from the drugs but were not yet eating. In spite of Toni's warning we had foolishly supposed they would begin eating at once. Already the place had begun to smell of stale, drying urine. Flies buzzed over the heap of faeces and both rhino had turned their small drinking pools into muddy wallows.

John Clark asked for labour to clean the place up and cut grass to put into the pens for food and bedding. I asked him if he would live at the bomas and look after the rhino. It was obvious that he had a knack of handling them. They knew his voice and became calm when he approached them, talking softly. John agreed without hesitation.

That evening, men from the Kruger National Park arrived, led by Lappies Labuschagne, their Deputy Director, and Andrew Brynhard, then Park Warden.

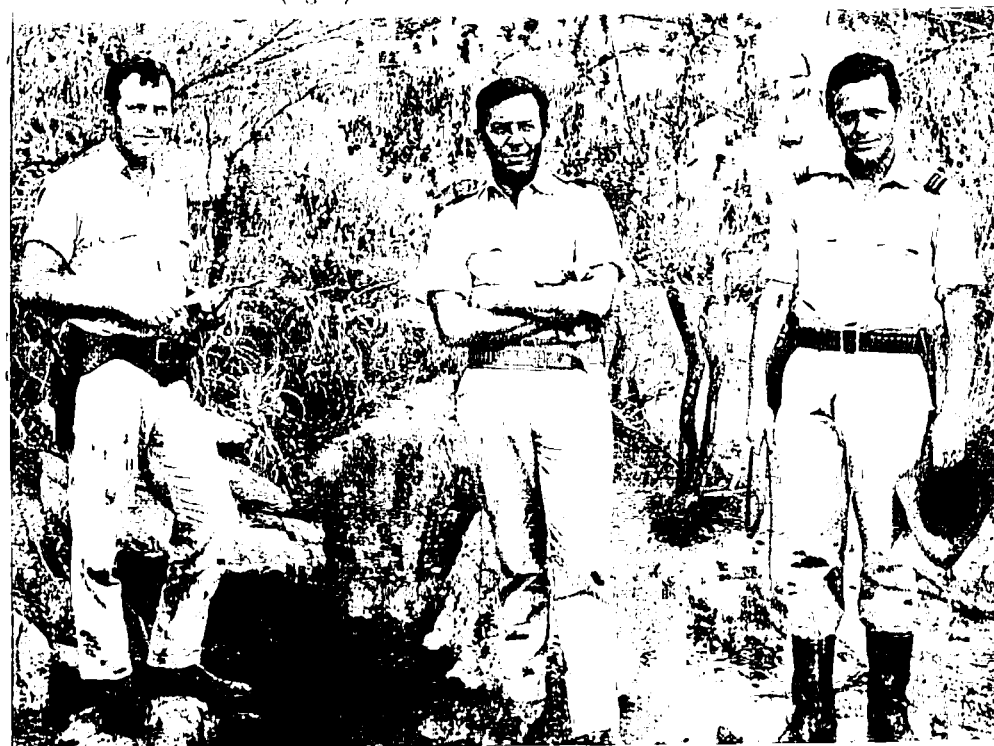
We were out early on 6 October and I darted a three-thousand-pound female we named Madhlozi after the area we had been working in. She ran off with a bull, and at one stage the horsemen had more than twenty rhino running all round them. After two miles fast running she came to a halt. The horsemen chased the bull away, we got the lorry to the site and began our routine measuring. I noticed she had been mated, her hindquarters being covered in semen. This explained why the bull was reluctant to leave.



22. Gordon Bailey

23. Ken Rochat 'never ruffled'

24. On patrol: John Forrest (left); the author (centre); Nick Steele (right)



REPOPULATING THE KRUGER PARK

We had developed a new way of loading. Instead of hand-wincing the crate up inch by inch, we pulled it with a steel cable attached to the Land-Rover and running over a pole on the cab of the lorry. This was John Page's idea.

Madhlozi stood shivering and sweating in the crate. There was something dreadfully pathetic seeing a wild animal incarcerated and I felt sad as we drove her to the third boma. She recovered sooner and more completely than the other two rhino. She had been darted in the leg and the drug took effect quicker and seemed to wear off more rapidly.

We got four white rhino in four days; the fourth we called Mfohloza after Vaughan-Kirby. We were very proud of our efforts but desperately tired and frustrated by the innumerable mechanical failures and lack of proper equipment. I was apprehensive too about the next stage of the operation, getting the rhino into the crates and making the long journey to the Kruger Park.

A list of auxiliary equipment was drawn up; cane knives and axes to chop through bush when necessary, ropes to tie down and sails to cover the crate, towing cable, pliers, funnel and hosepipe to give rhino water, four-gallon jerry cans for water and petrol; sacks to wedge in rough corners, old tyres to put in crates, crowbars and poles to lift the crate on to the rollers.

A drug box was fitted with syringes, pliers (to pull darts out of rhino hide), tape measure, penicillin, and special compartments for the narcotic, the tranquillizer, and the hyoscine; ear tags and applicator, terramycin ointment, distilled water, CO₂ cartridges, citric acid, and tablets; dart bodies and spare needles and a thermometer. As a precaution against the far too fallible human memory, I pasted a list on the cover. A notebook and a spare ballpoint pen completed the drug box equipment.

John Clark took to resting in the day when the rhino slept. At night they came to life, viciously horning everything that moved or standing on their hind legs and bashing the stockade. I could hear the thumping of the rhino and John's frantic calls to the labour for help from our house, a mile away. In the morning when I went down to John, he



25. V.I.P.'s visiting rhino bomas; left to right: the author with Lord Moran and Dr. Werner Schautte

26. Feeding time for the babies



was trying to repair the gaps in the pens with thick rope and cable. The bomas looked like a spider web with the walls strengthened by ropes criss-crossing from the top of the corner poles.

Then new complications arose. Mandhlagazi's dart wound turned septic and began swelling. Next day John Clark met me on the path, unshaven and red-eyed from lack of sleep.

'Mandhlagazi hasn't defecated since we brought him here,' he said. 'The dart wound is giving him a lot of pain.'

From observation I knew dung heaps often stimulated defecation, so we collected fresh lumps and threw them into Mandhlagazi's pen. We watched hopefully as he smelt them, but it did not have the desired result. As Nick so rightly said later, 'It's bad enough having a constipated child, but when a rhino won't shit what the hell do you do?'

That afternoon we roped him and after a furious struggle gave him an injection of Prostigmin which caused muscular cramps. He bellowed loudly and his mood stayed vicious.

The two females were far more tractable and they would feed from John's hands after only four days in the pen. But the only grass they would touch was *Panicum maximum*, buffalo grass. They refused every other grass we offered them, including lucerne, even when we sandwiched it between *Panicum*. When all the rhino were eating, John had to cut enough *Panicum* to fill four Land-Rovers.

A sense of urgency filled us. The rhino had to be tamed and made ready for the long journey. On 14 October the National Parks Board intended unveiling the memorial to Colonel Stevenson Hamilton, and the arrival of the rhino was intended to be part of the ceremony.

Constipation and dart wounds began bothering the other three rhino. Mandhlagazi made dummy charges and sent mud flying when anyone walked past his pen. He knocked the hosepipe from a Zulu's hand when it was put through the reeds to fill up the waterhole. A tractor bringing a load of poles made all the rhino nervous. When the engine backfired it sent them crashing round, banging into the sides of the bomas.

Mpila was the only one who became tame enough to come

forward to have her horn rubbed. She took no notice when her water hole was filled, and quietly drank her forty-four gallons a day. She tried to widen her wallow by knocking down the edges with her feet, then walking round in circles as the edges crumbled in.

Mandhlagazi's agitation became more marked as his dart wound festered and the thin dribble of pus attracted hordes of black flies. He learned to move the gate poles to one side and nearly escaped twice. His constipation worsened and he walked round the boma through the wallow, squealing pathetically.

We put grass in the corner and he would lie on it like a huge dog, then get up squealing to push against Mpila's pen. Nothing we did would stop him putting his forefeet on the gate and battering it with loud shrieks of rage. The day before we were due to load the animals Mandhlagazi's constipation was so bad he rubbed his anus against the rough poles and removed layers of skin.

When the crates from the Kruger Park arrived we put them in front of the bomas and tried to get the rhino to feed inside, but with the exception of Mpila they were far too wary. They made moves in the evening when they were undisturbed, but we could get nowhere near to push poles across the door to trap them inside. Our attempts to lure the rhino into the crates next morning were futile. They were due to leave that afternoon; there was only one thing to do and that was to rope them in like the trappers in Uganda did. This was a harsh method which we had hoped to avoid.

I took the job in hand and made myself unpopular by asking everyone to leave the area. All the available Zulu labourers were summoned from Mpila camp. A rope was threaded through a hole in the front door of the crate with a running noose on the end. Then we took turns to lasso the rhino. They soon learnt to flick the rope off but Owen dropped it over Madhlozi's horn and when she moved her head back the noose slid over her ears.

'Pull, pull!' Owen yelled hoarsely. 'We've got her!'

The excited Zulus dropped the rope to run and look, and there was a pandemonium of shouts and curses. Nick and

John Clark jumped off the boma, pulled the rope taut and called the labourers to drag her into the crate. She dug her feet in firmly and shook her head from side to side, but the combined strength of twenty men was too much for her. She was pulled squealing into the crate.

The next was Mpila. John enticed her to the door of the crate with a handful of green grass.

'I love this animal and it's a damned unfair way of getting her,' he said, scratching her forehead.

The noose dropped over her head and the tug of war against twenty sweating, chanting Africans began. Mpila viciously horned her crate as she was slowly dragged in. While the straining labourers held the rope taut, John Clark leapt into the pen, lifted the door, and bolted it into position. Then, surprisingly, both Madhlozi and Mpila defecated. The strain of being pulled in worked when nothing else had done.

With two rhino in the crates I felt happier. It had been easier than I expected. We winched the crates on to the waiting lorries and the first two rhino were on their four-hundred-mile journey to the Kruger Park by three o'clock.

Mandhlagazi's wound was syringed with permanganate, he was roped and drawn, kicking and squealing, into a crate. The strain burst his dart wound open and he also defecated, but he had by no means given up the struggle. He turned turtle in the crate. Nick Steele battled for an hour to right him, and was about to pull him out and release him in the veld when he righted himself. The other rhino, Mfohloza, fought too, kicking bits off his crate and rolling over inside.

The first part of the journey was chaotic. The transport was separated by fifty miles, and met later that evening at Mkuzi drift where we tried to give the animals water. Mpila was the only one who did not knock her plastic baby bath flying.

Andrew Brynhard and I discussed arrangements for the rest of the journey. We decided that Nick and I would lead the convoy with our radio switched on, while the two film men, Sven Persson and Jimmy Anderson, would bring up the rear with one of our portable wirelasses. Sven called us up

when there was trouble with a rhino, which was roughly every hour. Mandhlagazi was the main cause of trouble. He repeatedly jammed his anterior horn in a corner of the crate, and one of us would have to hang by our heels, get a rope round his neck and pull him free.

We reached Gollel, the Swaziland border post, at two o'clock in the morning, at which point Mandhlagazi chose to twist himself round and on to his side. Bleary eyed and irritable as we were, we tried for an hour to get him on his feet. We used rubber pipes, ropes, anything to right him. At three o'clock I decided it was hopeless and said either we shoot him or take him back to Umfolozi.

Andrew Brynhard and Lappies Labuschagne said they would wait with the rhino for a little longer and suggested we drive on. As the truck jerked forward, Mandhlagazi stood up as though nothing had happened and we sped over the Swaziland roads.

'Just like bloody sheep,' Nick said. 'Always looking for another way to die.'

The Lebombo mountains, the hunting ground of Baldwin, Drummond, and Leslie, lay on our right. They had seen the white rhino in all its glory on the flats we were now driving over, and I wondered what they would think of our rhino translocation.

Nick and I took turns driving. Thick dust poured in through every crack, settled on the windscreen and turned to mud when the dew fell. The radio crackled and the lights of the convoy flashed in the rear view mirror. The Southern Cross dipped in the south.

Dawn broke over the Swaziland lowveld, on the tall knob-thorn trees and red *Themeda* grass stretching into the distance. Long-tailed shrikes perched on the telephone wires and glossy starlings and European rollers flashed in the early morning sun.

We reached the Mbuluzi river, foaming crystal clear over the rocks, at eleven o'clock. The lorries crossed the low concrete causeway and stopped on the north bank. We lowered the baby baths into the crates and filled them with water. The two cows drank placidly but Mfohloza and Mandh-

lagazi smashed the baths to pieces. We dropped grass in the crates but they refused to eat.

We washed and shaved but as we moved, Mandhlagazi wedged his horn in the crate. This time it was so tightly jammed we had to prise one of the planks out to release him. Once we reached the tarred road the animals settled down, but there was a delay when a traffic cop stopped the convoy and asked for papers. Andrew Brynhard soon explained the situation and we entered Kruger Park at Malaleni gate. The last thirty odd miles to Pretorius Kop were a pleasure to drive – any game reserve was like home to Nick and me.

A crowd of people, including the Administrator of Natal, watched the unloading. The original plan was to release the animals in the paddock, but with all the people about this would have been disastrous, so the rhino were put into bomas. A battered Mandhlagazi thumped his crate as it was let down the rollers. He entered the boma and drank deeply from the pool, then proceeded to turn it into a wallow.

The following day Nick and I were ceremonially opening the boma doors, and there was Mandhlagazi lying prone on the ground. For a moment we thought he was dead, but as we approached him he leapt to his feet and chased us round the boma. He had the last laugh.

Thol Pienaar, the biologist of the Kruger Park, wrote to me later to say that the four rhino had settled down well in their new surroundings. Mandhlagazi, true to form, had charged the fence but had made no impression. Thol said: 'Mföhloza was a bit anti-social but during the last few days he has joined up with the other three and they spend most of their time on the new burn either grazing or lying up in the shade.'

These four were the vanguard of the hundred white rhino which were translocated to the Kruger Park. Thol Pienaar, Andrew Brynhard and Henry Wollhuter – a ranger and old school friend – kept us informed about the rhino. It pleased us to find others as enthusiastic about the white rhino as we were. Thol mentioned that he had caught hippo with the same drug, and Toni Harthoorn wrote to say he had immobilized buffalo.

A few days later I received a personal note from John Page, which was much appreciated by the rhino team. 'Thank you and congratulations on a first class job successfully completed. I feel you and your Umfolozi team have achieved a tremendous objective. I am certain no one will ever achieve more for this Board and I would like you to know it. To have been allowed to play a small part with you all was more than a pleasure – it was a privilege I shall long remember.'

Although we had moved four rhino simultaneously we knew there were many problems to be solved before we could ship rhino overseas. No rhino would survive a three-week sea journey if it behaved like Mandhlagazi.

Chapter 17

White Rhino Mating

WHILE John was working at the bomas, Nick Steele patrolled the southern buffer zone and Owen Letley returned to his outpost at Thobothi.

Owen radioed me early one morning and reported he had seen a new bird which he suspected was a martial eagle. He asked me to come out to identify it. I rode out to the headwaters of the Thobothi stream where Owen proudly showed me his 'new bird' sitting on the top branches of a knob-thorn tree. He was rather disappointed when I told him it was a white-hooded vulture.

We rode back via the Nyamagwatengwa stream and after we off-saddled the horses, Owen showed me where he had witnessed two white rhino bulls fighting and the victor copulating with a young cow. One of the bulls was Onehorn, a rhino we successfully darted with gallamine triethiodide during Toni Harthoorn's first visit.

Owen said he was out on patrol and while crossing the Kandalenyati stream (Buffalo Head) he heard a rhino squeal. He sneaked quietly through the grass and came upon One-

horn, another bull and a young heifer. The time was seven in the morning. As Owen appeared, Onehorn put the other bull to flight and chased it for fifty yards, squealing crossly. Onehorn then returned to the young cow making a low sobbing, choking noise like an unfit man after a long hard run. He varied this with a noise not unlike a very young eland calf wanting to nurse. Onehorn walked up to her, rested his chin on her rump for a minute or so then resumed grazing.

It was obvious that the cow was ready to accept him but the interfering bull was persistent and kept returning to voice his dissatisfaction loudly. Onehorn replied to this with a deep rumbling growl and charged the other animal. The clash of their horns reverberated in the bush. These skirmishes occurred again and again, ending each time with Onehorn walking after his cow and the other bull following. There was a lot of movement but they remained in a relatively small bushy area which they seemed to prefer to the more open ground. The cow constantly kept her tail curled up or over to one side and as she walked she discharged a trickle of pale yellow liquid.

'She had a very strong rhino smell,' Owen said, pointing to where he had been hiding. 'An interesting fact,' he continued, 'was that at one time they were joined by another heifer and neither of the males objected to her, but she moved off after a few minutes.'

Onehorn tried to mount once but was foiled by an overhanging branch. The cow made no attempt to move off though she staggered a bit under his weight. Owen was very busy keeping himself a few yards upwind of them to watch what was going on, and staying out of reach of the battles, some of which were uncomfortably close. After an hour the wind changed and they ran off. In the chaos Onehorn was separated from his mate.

'His agitation really amused me,' Owen laughed. 'The urge to reproduce in rhino must be very strong. He ran round and round in a circle with his nose to the ground, trying to pick up his cow's scent. I think it must be the fluid she discharged that made him able to follow her. He nearly knocked me flat twice, but he took no notice. He finally

found the scent and galloped off with me following. He found the cow with the other bull who obviously believed in making hay while the sun shone.'

Onehorn uttered his low, rumbling growl and launched himself at the other bull, who flattened his ears and backed away with loud rumbling noises. They clashed repeatedly, their horns rattling. A haze of dust hung overhead.

Onehorn returned to his wayward cow triumphant and full of affection, making his calf-like noises. They grazed along for a while then the other bull reappeared making the usual hiccuping noises followed by the deep rumbling growls. They fought once more and when the dust cleared Onehorn went back to his mate, placed his chin on her rump, and this time mounted her. He remained in the mounted position for three to five minutes, then slid off. They moved into some shade and rested for half an hour, their hides damp with sweat. Onehorn got up and tried to rouse his mate by pushing her and making his soft calf-like noises, a pitiful sound. This had no effect so he started to mount her while she was lying down. As she got up the other bull came back, so they fought again.

The cow moved off and the contestants followed, fighting every so often. Onehorn and the cow stopped in a patch of shade. The other bull walked to a nearby wallow and rolled in the mud. After a short rest, the courting rhino took to a path, and Owen followed at a safe distance. They met another pair of rhino coming from the opposite direction. The oncoming rhino stopped abreast and refused to move. Onehorn rumbled and growled but gave way and left the path.

Owen showed me where the four had met.

'I was so busy looking ahead I didn't see the muddy opposition bull coming in on the run. He wasn't welcome and got a licking for his troubles,' Owen said. 'Soon after this Onehorn mounted his cow again and after three minutes in the mounted position he started to erect his penis. This took a full two minutes - there must have been close on three feet of it. He couldn't seem to get his penis more than a few inches into the cow. She sort of moaned, it was like a low

gurgle, and moved about the clearing, reversing, going forward, then backing again very slowly. Onehorn tried desperately for a quarter of an hour, but he couldn't complete the siring act, and when he was dislodged his penis immediately folded back. They were breathing heavily and they both lay down under a tree.

'I had temporarily got shot of the opposition while all this was going on. I stood right in his path and as he moved towards the couple I hissed at him to *'voetsak'* (go away) and let him have it on the nose with a stick. It worked - he trotted off with a lot of snorting, but he didn't disturb the others. He came back later to fight again. I had to jump behind a tree and they brushed past in a cloud of dust with the cause of it all leading the way. That was the last I saw of them.'

Owen and I returned to Mpila along the Mtunzini ridge. It was a disheartening ride. We passed a mass of goats and cattle, and saw some reed buck running away from the noise of shouting herdboys. The squatters had begun ploughing along the road near Sokwezela hill.

Later we investigated the report of an injured white rhino bull near the Kandedube pans. We found the poor old beast struggling along with a broken front leg. It was able to move only by pushing its jaw along the ground. The guards said squatters' dogs had chased it over a krantz. It had to be shot.

Chapter 18

Black Rhino: A Death

IN 1961 thirty-seven black rhino died in a short period in Hluhluwe Game Reserve. Senior veterinary officials from Onderstepoort examined the carcasses but could find nothing wrong. Norman Deane was anxious that we capture some, so the vets could examine them alive. On 6 November, we went after our first black rhino. Nick sent the horses over

to Ntabamhlope in an old crate which had been used years before to transport giraffe from the Transvaal. He and Owen rode to Hlogohlogo (Weaver Bird) hills. The horses had become an indispensable part of the capture - 'the unsung heroes' Nick called them.

Norman Deane organized a search for black rhino in the morning and Rangers Bob Murray and Garth Carpenter found seventeen in the Nomagetcha valley. I reached Hluhluwe in the afternoon as the guards reported seeing two black rhino near Gunjaneni gate. We left immediately and I mixed the drugs. We had run out of Themalon again so I was forced to use morphine, 1.25 grammes of it, enough to kill a lot of human beings. No Sernyl was available so I mixed the morphine with Largactil tranquillizer and added 100 mgms of hyoscine.

We later found Sernyl was essential in the drug mixture for black rhino because it stopped them fighting. It was the reverse with the white rhino; we had no more trouble with them fighting their crates once Sernyl was left out of the drug mixture, but we had some saddening experiences before we realized our mistakes.

Stalking black rhino on foot was not easy. They liked dense bush and the smallest twig was enough to deflect a dart. It was different in a vehicle, their habit of charging gave me a chance to shoot them in the rump when they turned. But the first rhino I darted ran when it heard the Land-Rover. Norman Deane drove skilfully over the rough ground and the dart whacked home as the rhino went into a thicket of *Acacia karroo*. Nick and Owen were after it but Nick's stirrup leather slipped as he was galloping through a donga and he fell headlong. The black rhino disappeared into the low country towards the Hluhluwe river. While the guards looked for another, Nick came limping back.

'This is a really dicey game,' he said. 'These black rhino simply melt into the bush and you don't know whether they're waiting for you or not.'

I was worried about the whole capture. Black rhino in my opinion are one of the most dangerous animals in the bush. I had had some unpleasant experiences. One nearly got me

on the Makatini flats in 1952, another chased me in Mkuzi Game Reserve and I reached a tree just in time. One had pussy-footed after me while I was shooting rations and only the warning shout of a game guard saved me from that curved horn.

In 1955 I was coming back late from a long foot patrol in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, my mind on the billy of tea I was going to drink, and I stumbled on a black rhino cow and calf in the Inyonigazana stream bed. The cow was so close when she charged that her snort deafened me. Fortunately my hat and side haversack fell off, and she hooked them instead. Then on the first wilderness trail conducted in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, the trail party were approaching Mahobosheni camp on the White Umfolozi river when Maqubu yelled a warning '*Ubejane!*' as a black rhino splashed out of a wallow and came straight for us. One man pulled himself up on to a branch with one hand – normally an impossible feat. I crouched behind a tree but not before I felt its coarse skin scrape my arm as it rushed snorting past. If anyone had been injured on that first Trail the whole idea could have failed. The bad publicity would have killed it.

Norman Deane had many brushes with black rhino when he was officer in charge of Hluhluwe Game Reserve and so had Roddy Ward, the ecologist.

Peter Hitchins, who later studied the black rhino full time, had once been chased up a tree and the cow had stood on her hind legs and tried to hook him out.

Ranger Gordon Bailey had seen a favourite horse gored in the stomach, and the intestines spill out onto the veld.

A game guard returning late to the Mahlabbashane outpost had been surprised by a notorious black rhino which ripped him from his thigh to his knee. Gatekeeper West had also been caught and had his leg torn open. Another game guard had a lucky escape in Hluhluwe Game Reserve. The black rhino chasing him lunged as he was running and the horn caught his handcuff belt. The guard was flipped into the air and landed on the rhino's back. He bounced off and crawled away.

Black rhino are not animals to be trifled with, but it was

understood that no one would ever shoot a rhino in self defence. Our job was to protect them. In spite of their bad reputation they invoked an affection in anyone who had much to do with them. They really were dramatic animals, as Nick said. It was wonderful to watch them running across the veld, or slipping through a dense thicket, or wallowing in a mud hole. I always wanted to put them in a bullfighter's ring and see how long a matador lasted.

After the escape of the first black rhino we discussed other ways of keeping them in sight.

Open country is scarce in Hluhluwe, so rangers and game guards were posted on the highest points and told to watch the rhino's movements once it had been darted.

Bob Murray said that a black rhino bull was lying in an open glade although encroaching acacia scrub might deflect the dart.

I stalked it on foot, mentally measuring the distance from a tall marula I intended climbing if the rhino came for me. I hit it in the right shoulder and ran to the marula tree but the rhino went the other way, much to Norman's disgust; he had hoped it would charge me. The two horsemen cantered off keeping a respectful distance from the rhino and the rangers on the high points shouted out its movements.

We ran to a prominent ridge and kept the rhino under observation for twelve minutes, but the drug was having no effect. We watched the rhino walk over the ridge and disappear into the bush. Maqubu tracked it, but lost the spoor in a maze of wildebeest and impala tracks. We scoured the area but found no further sign of it.

The following day Bob Murray went out early to locate black rhino in the Nomagetcha and found four in an unhealthy patch of bush.

I mixed the drug, increased the morphine to 2 grammes, the hyoscine to 200 mgms and diluted it all in 16 c.c. Largac-til. To get it to mix properly I had to warm up the plastic bottle, so I left it in the radiator of the Land-Rover with the Capchur gun.

Maqubu and I moved quietly through the bush after one