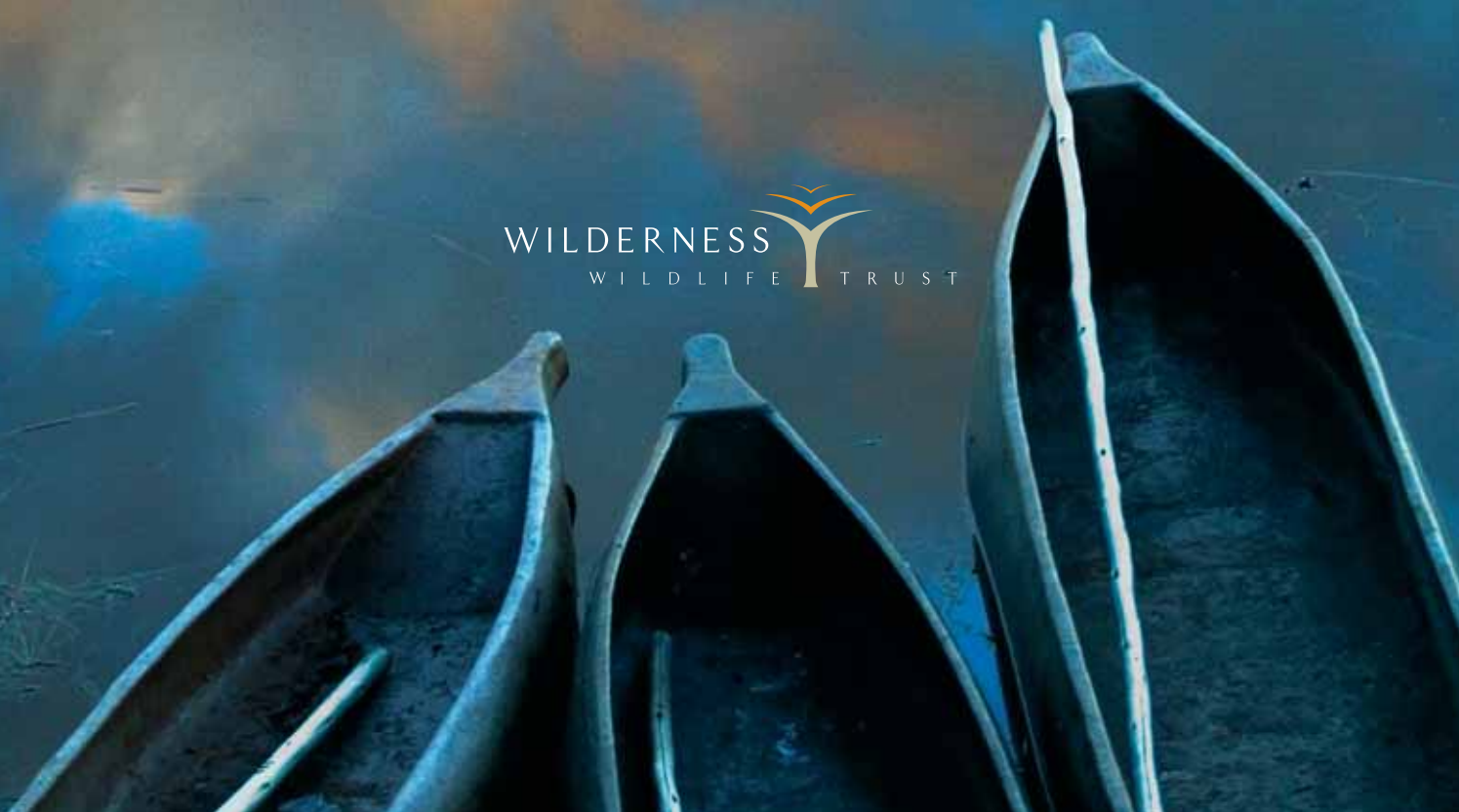


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# *Botswana Rhino Relocation & Reintroduction Project*

**T**his project, also known as the Mombo Rhino Project, began in 2001 when some 30 white rhino were successfully reintroduced into the Mombo area of the Moremi Game Reserve (in a joint effort by Wilderness Safaris, Wilderness Safaris Wildlife Trust and Botswana's Department of Wildlife), after having been poached out in the 1990s. Since then, the project has concentrated on monitoring and observing the animals, their social and territorial behaviour and their response to the annual Okavango floodwaters, rainfall and other animals in the area.



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2006 saw the birth of only one calf to the white rhino population in Moremi. This was the second calf born to a female released at Mombo during November 2002. Her first calf was born at Mombo during May 2004 making the two calves almost two years apart. This is a sure sign that conditions at Mombo are perfect for the white rhino, in that they have security, space, food and water. The monitoring officer, Poster Mpho, is expecting further births at any time, also to females who have previously produced calves in 2004.

During this year most of the original transmitters fitted to the rhinos on release during 2002/3 had used up their batteries. Without the transmitters working, monitoring work became difficult and time consuming. However, our master rhino tracker and monitoring officer, Poster, has had significant success under difficult conditions. This necessitated the planning and action of a project to fit new transmitters to many of the rhino.

Upgraded transmitters were sourced from SIRTRACK of New Zealand, a company specialising in tracking devices. Dr Chris Foggin and Raoul du Toit flew in from Zimbabwe to assist and teach us all the correct methodology for this important exercise. At the time of writing, we have successfully fitted eight transmitters, seven of which are on white rhino and one on a black rhino cow. We continue to follow and attempt to find further animals on which to fit the transmitters.

The new transmitters are proving to be very much more successful than the first set fitted during 2002/3 with a slightly improved range and clearer signal.

The government of Botswana and Project coordinator Map Ives are still busy negotiating with a neighbouring country to bring in up to 20 black rhino

to bolster the current Botswana population of only four animals. Although it is early days, we are confident that these rhino will be on their way during winter 2007. If successful, this would bring the wild population in Botswana to 24, the beginnings of a "viable" breeding herd of this highly endangered species. ♪

