

## Wish You Were Here...?

Frankfurt Zoological Society has been involved in North Luangwa National Park (NLNP) since 1986. This support over the last 24 years in NLNP has done an amazing amount to safeguard this park. Input through the North Luangwa Conservation Programme (NLCP) has concentrated on support for law enforcement, through training and the supply of essential field equipment, rations, vehicles and the building of houses for field staff. The Park's scouts are well-trained and well-motivated. And all the while, the wildlife goes from strength to strength.

**Claire Lewis | Technical Advisor, North Luangwa Conservation Programme**

**I**n 2003, a programme began to reintroduce black rhino into the Park and in May 2010 the founder population was completed with the delivery of the final five animals. The black rhino have been introduced into a large intensive protection zone at the heart of the Park and, with a few births and natural deaths, this fledgling population now stands at 27. These are the only black rhino in the country and their presence is a strong sign of how secure the NLNP is.

The future for North Luangwa seems a bright one, particularly with long-term support. FZS has renewed its partnership with the Zambia Wildlife Authority to 2018 and recently completed a strategic plan for the future management of the NLNP black rhinos. Increasing revenue from tourism is next on the agenda and NLCP is working towards developing a more sustainable financial model for NLNP that will ensure its protection for years to come. But it's not an easy task. In 2009, NLNP received around 1,000 visitors bringing in less than \$100,000 in revenue. Annual operations, funded through FZS and other donors, cost about \$600,000 and ZAWA inputs about the same in salaries for law enforcement officers. It's not rocket science to work out that the Park costs an enormous amount of money that tourism just doesn't realise.

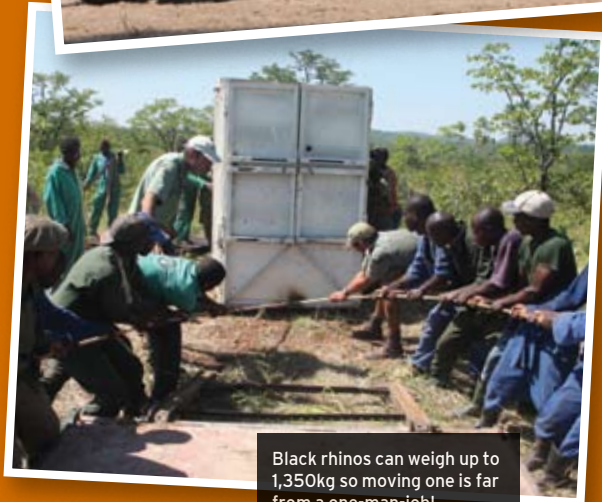
Taking the genre for which Zambia is renowned, walking safaris, and combining them with mobile bush camping inside the heart of the rhino areas might be one way to attract more visitors and high-end operators. But, with few direct international flights from Europe, Zambia falls far down a travel agent's list of easy sells. With no scheduled flights to NLNP, it takes a determined traveller to get here. Add to this a short season, no year-round all-weather road access, few game-viewing roads (this is mainly a walking safari destination) and relatively lower densities of wildlife, and NLNP doesn't end up ticking too many boxes, unless you are a world-weary safari nut looking for something off the beaten track.

And if that's what you are, then it is a destination like no other – wild, untamed, unspoilt, pristine, unique are all words that have been used to describe this jewel of Zambia's national parks. The soul of the Park is defined by the Mwaleshi River which runs west-east through its middle to the Luangwa River. Concentrations of lion, buffalo, the lesser-known but no less impressive Cookson's wildebeest and, of course, the country's only black rhinos gives NLNP something less tame/more wild and unique to offer would-be tourists. Harnessing and developing this potential is a new challenge for NLCP, but one that could begin to generate revenue to break even on

operational costs. No doubt, unless there is a seismic shift in the tourist market, donor funding will always have to be an integral part of protecting the NLNP black rhino, but putting this inimitable creature at its forefront could provide some of the answers.



North Luangwa National Park is noted for its massive herds of buffalo, a spectacular sight when seen on the run, kicking up dust for miles behind them.



Black rhinos can weigh up to 1,350kg so moving one is far from a one-man-job!

### Grants

Thank you to the Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, which is awarding \$15,000 towards the purchase of a new vehicle. Thanks also to USFWS for its grant of \$12,800 towards NLCP's Conservation Education Programme, to Wildlife Worldwide for its donation of £500, and to Rod Tether, London Marathon runner, who raised a wonderful £7,534 for NLCP, to which Save the Rhino added £5,000 from our own core funds.