

Hope for the rhino

Savory

Are South Africa's rhino going the same way as Zimbabwe's asks **Rozanne Savory**

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In 1984, when Zimbabwe's Zambezi valley was declared a World Heritage Site, over 3 000 black rhino roamed the area.

Late in 1994, just ten short years later, the last two remaining black rhino, a cow and her calf, were relocated from the valley to an Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ) deep into the interior of the country. The few hundred black rhino left from Zimbabwe's once huge population are today fenced and guarded.

The fate of the rhino in Africa has been a tragic one. Almost systematically, rhinos have been poached to the brink of extinction, or have become extinct in many countries to the north of us - purely for their horn which is believed by many Oriental people to have medicinal properties.

Glenn Tatham, chief warden of Zimbabwe's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, warns, "Anyone who believes that a driving force that has killed tens of thousands of rhinos elsewhere in Africa is going to leave South Africa alone has to be very naive and ignorant."

South Africa is home to over 7 000 rhinos - both black and white - the biggest population left anywhere in the world.

Last year, more rhinos were poached in South Africa than in any one of the previous five years.



The increase is not alarming, nor does it indicate a crisis situation - yet.

Whereas Zimbabwe had to withstand a concerted poaching onslaught, rhino poaching incidents in SA have been isolated and sporadic, with no pattern. One rhino poached here, two there - a slow attrition. But Tatham's words are never far from our minds.

Over one thousand of South Africa's rhinos are owned privately. In contrast to the official Parks Boards which are ever-mindful of the potential threat and prepared and equipped accordingly, what of the private rhino owner?

In order to acquaint rhino owners with all matters relating to protection and security in particular, the African Rhino Owners' Association (AROA) has recently been formed under the chairmanship of Clive Walker.

AROA's main function will be to provide an information network so that all those responsible for the wellbeing of rhinos, including the custodians of rhinos in other countries in Africa, will be kept informed, aware and alert.

Equally important, AROA will bring together private rhino owners under one co-ordinated body. AROA falls under the auspices of the Rhino & Elephant Foundation.

BOOKLET ON TRANSLOCATED ELEPHANTS

During October last year, the Translocated Elephant Information Centre (TEIC), with the Rhino & Elephant Foundation, held an Elephant Workshop.

This workshop was convened specifically to address problems and difficulties that had been experienced with translocated elephants - both juvenile and in family units - and those attending the workshop included elephant owners, researchers, veterinarians and representatives from the National Parks Board and Nature Conservation.

One of the results of the workshop was the formation of an interim committee to establish the Translocated Elephant Association chaired by Marion Garai.

The TEA committee has already completed the Translocated Elephant Information Booklet, which gives comprehensive guidelines on the care of translocated elephants as well as information on possible problems, transportation, insurance requirements, boma construction and so on.

The Information Booklet will be completed in time to accompany the elephant tender documents sent out by the Kruger National Park this year.

For more information, contact REF. ■



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The green side of ecotourism

Everyone with a thatched rondavel and a few wild animals is hopping onto the ecotourism bandwagon these days. Frik Grobbelaar takes a hard line with such people.

"There's ecotourism and then there's the bandwagon. The bandwagon is about commercialising the concept of the environment without any commitment to its principles.

"The accepted definition of ecotourism is purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to the local people."

So how does Rustler's Valley fit in?

"On the surface the resort is entertainment-driven – a sociable bar with a large, high quality music selection, live music weekends and three annual outdoor music festivals. Rustler's is primarily a weekend getaway, but behind the scenes, we have quiet midweek periods when we concentrate on our true objectives:

■ To protect the indigenous part of the farm and to establish permanent and sustainable land usage. To

this end we have entered into cooperative agreements with two neighbours to reintroduce all the original wildlife and to protect the natural flora which we believe is the last remaining pocket at this particular altitude. We hope to have the hidden valley, which forms a large part of this area, registered as a botanical garden. It consists of fynbos, kiepersol trees, protea and all the flowers that used to exist at this altitude in Lesotho.

■ To transform the domesticated or arable areas of the farm into a permaculture model using a combination of agroforestry and organic farming.

We are creating a forest of multipurpose trees with perennial plant life beneath the canopy, for food and fertiliser.

The object of these farming practices is not to make money but to ensure that all people living on the land have a plentiful, perennial food supply.

■ A rural village development for the farm labourers to transform their surroundings into a shaded, food-rich environment.

The lodge and music festivals raise money to finance these objectives."



AND YOU THINK THE WEATHER'S A BITCH

In the long while that Charlotte's owned Camping Africa, she's

trashed more tents, sleeping bags, ground-

sheets and raincoats than Hurricane

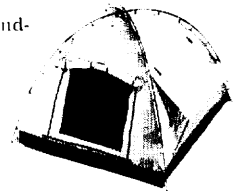
Hilda. She rips 'em up to check

that they're made right. If they aren't, the folks

who made 'em had better head for the hills. It's

why Camping Africa's outdoor gear weathers

any storm.



Camping
AFRICA