

—sold. The White Rhino population now numbers 50. To maintain balanced populations of Lion (approx.18) and Cheetah (approx.20) four of the former and three of the latter were relocated during the year.

Phinda's Game Protection Unit continued its good work, with 250 snares found and removed, and three poachers arrested. Patrols found ten animals (Warthog, Nyala, Impala and Common Reedbuck) dead in snares.

Four trial 'Green Rhino Safaris' were conducted in collaboration with the Endangered Wildlife Trust. These safaris provide individuals with the opportunity to track, stalk and dart a White Rhinoceros. Once the animal has been immobilised, it has its ears notched in such a way that it can be recognised as an individual. A set of three microchips are inserted into the horn, to enable future management and as an anti-poaching device. While the animal is under anaesthetic, it is monitored by a wildlife vet and nurse and blood and hair samples are taken for genetic analysis.

2001 will mark Phinda's tenth anniversary and an opportunity to review the tremendous progress made here in the past decade.

*Stoff Kane-Berman*



*Stoff Kane-Berman*

## Short Notes and Interesting Sightings

### Cheetah Families Meet

In April 2000, a female Cheetah and her four very young cubs were observed in an area that had been frequented recently by a different female and her three much older cubs. While watching the female and four, the second family was noticed in the background. This female had noted the presence of the mother and her four cubs and started to lead her own cubs towards the new arrivals. The two families stared at each other for a while before the growling and snarling began. This unnerved the female with the four cubs and she began to retreat, her turned back prompting the second female to pounce at her. The intensity of the situation now increased with physical conflict looking likely, but the tension dissolved and they both moved off in different directions. During the conflict the two sets of cubs became mixed up but soon rejoined their respective mothers.

*Benson Ngobane & Jabulani Nxumalo*

### White Rhinos Growing Up

A two-month old White Rhino calf was seen tasting the fresh dung of its mother and then investigating a patch of urine upon which it flared its lip in 'flehmen' fashion. Interestingly, the foals of Burchell's Zebra (like its rhino relative, it is also a hind-gut fermenter) are known to eat the dung of adults in order to obtain micro-organisms which then exist in their intestinal tract and help to digest the cellulose-rich diet.

In July, a White Rhino calf of approximately one year was seen suckling from its mother and then to watch intently as the adult cow rubbed first her face, then neck, side and rump on a frequently used Acacia rubbing post. The calf then repeated the entire rubbing process itself, step-by-step.

*Ross Goode & Gavin Lautenbach*

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Phinda, Maputland  
South Africa

A large male **Leopard** was seen to associate with a female and her two cubs for a period of at least two days. This is unusual given the cat's solitary nature and after seeing the tracks of another male in the vicinity we assumed the association to be due to the possibility of losing his cubs to a foreign male (JC:02/00). A male and female **Leopard** were seen walking down a track together after dark; the male then killed a **Warthog**, but before feeding the two mated (AH:06/00). In another sighting a male and female **Leopard** were seen to mate eleven times in 25 minutes (SN:07/00).

A single **Spotted Hyena** was seen with an **African Rock Python** in sand forest close to Forest Lodge at 16h45 (PG&NM:11/00).

Tracks of three **Honey Badgers** were seen on the beach at Sodwana Bay; the animals may have been searching for fresh turtle nests (JR:11/00). A **Honey Badger** was seen with two pups in the northern part of Phinda (JC:07/00).

A pair of **Suni** were observed mating in the Sand Forest - he grunted, she squealed, and copulation lasted for five minutes (RG:08/00).

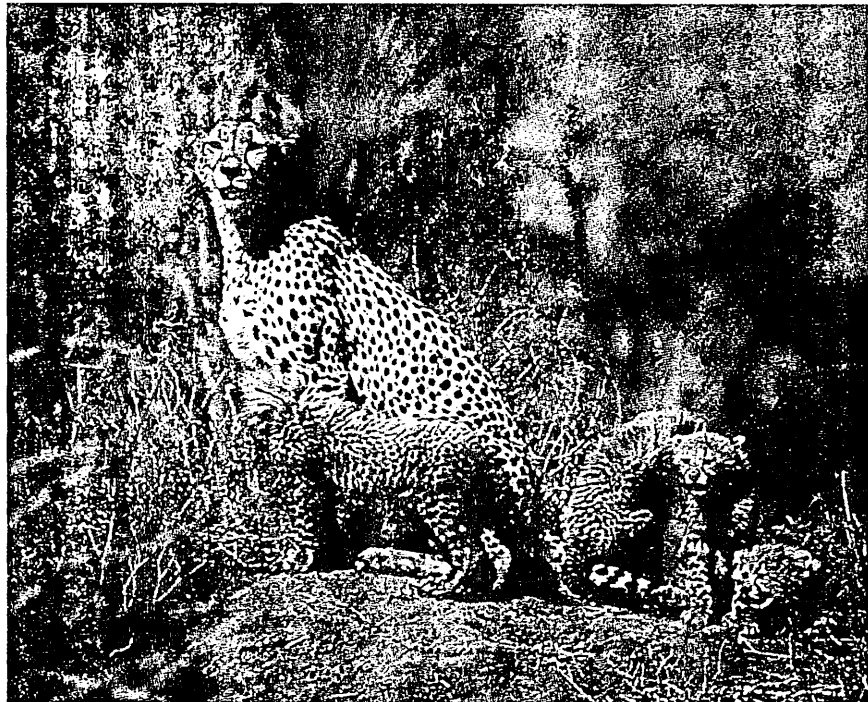
A **Bushpig** was seen to scavenge from an **Impala** kill that had been abandoned by a **Cheetah** and her cubs early in the afternoon; the pig discovered the carcass soon after dusk and was still feeding two hours later (OU:08/00).

**Observers:** Vanessa Strauss (VS), Ross Goode (RG), Prince Ndlovu (PN), James Curry (JC), Greg Higgs (GH), Bibi van Tienhoven (BvT), Richard White (RW), Walter Xhosa (WX), Abdullab Hassan (AH), Mike Munroe (MMu), Gavin Lautenbach (GL), Tim Carr (TC), Fraser Gear (FG), Simon Naylor (SN), Isobel Raymond (IR), Chris Roche (CR), John Roux (JR), Peter Gava (PG), Norbert Maboza (NM), observer unknown (OU).



Bradley van Yvoren

*Above: White Rhino have thrived at Phinda since the reserve was established and now number over 50 individuals. Below: Cheetah breed regularly at Phinda but are kept at a population of around twenty in order to maintain a healthy predator-prey balance.*



Kevin Pretorius