



# Bush Telegraph

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**LEGODIMO NATURE RESERVE IS SITUATED ON THE BANKS OF THE LIMPOPO RIVER. IT IS A PART OF THE TULI BLOCK IN THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA.**



The Great Limpopo Valley. A view from the sky. The rain season has been good this year.

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## Editor's Note:

Welcome to 2011!!

It is a new year with new possibilities and new challenges.

The Legodimo team would like to wish all our past, present and future volunteers a prosperous and happy year ahead.

The bush is fresh from all the rain we have been having and it seems like nature has also made a new start. Most animals have babies and some days it feels like driving around a crèche!

Our goal this year is to keep conserving, improve and multiply our efforts and to find new ways of making this world a better place. We encourage everyone who wants to be involved with making a difference to stay in touch with us and to pass on any ideas you might have. The work that we have done in the past 5 years has started a conservation mindset in the Tuli Block and more and more landowners are leaning towards conservation methods. We hope to continue and enlarge this movement alongside the volunteers

The feature article is a sad one, but the facts need to be known. Please send me any thoughts or opinions you may have.

Have a great month,  
Mieke



# Feature: Rhino Poaching in South Africa



300 (+) rhinos have been poached in South Africa since the start of 2010. That is 75% more than 2009! This is becoming a devastating crisis.

The hunting of rhinos and all trade in any form of rhino product has been banned since the 1980's, but there has been a massive surge in the demand from the black market. Demand in south Asia has doubled the price of horn in just 18 months. It stands at £36,300 a kilo, while gold is £24,600.

Far-Eastern cultures believe rhino horn to have healing properties for many common ailments from fever to acne.

The commercial manufacturing of rhino horn is mainly done by Chinese pharmaceutical companies. Experts believe that there has been a shift from Chinese to Vietnamese syndicates. Just before the opening of the 2010 Football World Cup, two Vietnamese nationals were arrested on Johannesburg airport and they were found with 18 rhino horns! Powdered horn has been in high demand since a Vietnamese minister claimed it helped cure his cancer.

This photo was taken by a volunteer in the Polokwane Nature Reserve. How long do we have before we won't be able to take pictures like these anymore?

The biggest threat to South African rhinos is directed from home. Anti-poaching authorities of South Africa are currently busy with an investigation on what they believe to be an "extensive" rhino poaching syndicate. The syndicate is operating from a farm in the Limpopo province. According to *The Sunday Independent*, this syndicate is responsible for 70% of the current poaching epidemic in South Africa and all the individuals involved in this syndicate are locally known as conservationists.

This network includes two well-known game veterinarians who supply dart guns and tranquilizers to the killers. Tranquilizers are used to immobilize the rhino, because Far-Eastern buyers prefer that the horn be removed straight from a live rhinoceros. They pay more money and the rhino gets left alone to die slowly from blood loss or hunger.

There are about 15000 rhinos left in Africa and 3000 in Asia.

Many Game Lodges have now employed private armed security to protect and follow their rhinos 24/7. It seems that this is the only way forward: Around the clock armed protection for each and every rhino we wish to keep alive.



## 9 things you probably did not know of rhinos:

- 1. A group of rhinos is called a "crash".**
- 2. A rhino's skin is much softer than it looks, and is actually quite sensitive to sunburns and insect bites. (That's why rhinos like rolling in the mud so much – it helps to protect them from the sunburns and insects.)**
- 3. Rhinos have poor eyesight, but very well-developed senses of smell and hearing. (And they will charge at you when startled – the best way to escape is by climbing a tree, if one is handy!)**
- 4. African rhinos have a symbiotic relationship with oxpeckers, also called "tick birds". In Swahili, the oxpecker is called "askari wa kifarū", which means "the rhino's guard". The oxpecker eats ticks and other insects it finds on the rhino, and creates a commotion when it senses danger.**
- 5. Three of the five surviving rhino species (black, Javan and Sumatran) are Critically Endangered, which means there is at least a 50% chance that these species will become extinct within three generations (for rhinos, this means about 30-60 years).**
- 6. The word rhinoceros comes from the Greek rhino (nose) and ceros (horn).**
- 7. Depending on the species, rhinos can live to be 35 – 50 years old.**
- 8. Rhino horns are made of keratin, the same material that makes up your hair and fingernails.**
- 9. The closest living rhino "relatives" are tapirs, horses and zebras.**

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