



## The Deserts of Southwestern Africa

Doug Mitek


*The recovery of Namibia's desert-dwelling black rhino from near extinction in the 1980's is testimony to the success of collaborative approaches to secure Africa's threatened wildlife. Save the Rhino Trust's (SRT) 20 years of working with Traditional Authorities and government agencies looked to combine the indigenous knowledge of those who lived in the area with practical science to meet these conservation goals. With the support of Round River, SRT hopes to further expand on these goals and explore the habitat needs of rhino in this unique landscape. This will assist decision makers to secure and identify areas to maximize rhino breeding levels, and once again see this charismatic animal re-introduced into its historical range.*

Mike Hearn  
Researcher, Save the Rhino Trust

## Namibian Rhino Conservation Project

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The Republic of Namibia occupies a large portion of southwestern Africa, lying between the frigid waters of the southern Atlantic Ocean and the expanses of the Kalahari Desert. On its western border is the infamous Skeleton Coast with extensive barren beaches and rolling dunes. In Namibia's varied habitats a diverse array of wildlife survives.



In the early 1980's, poaching caused the near extinction of black rhinoceros and desert elephants in northwestern Namibia. Fortunately, concerned groups of people recognized that this unchecked slaughter would result in the local extinction of wildlife in the Kunene Region of northwestern Namibia. The Save the Rhino Trust ([www.rhino-trust.org.na](http://www.rhino-trust.org.na)) was formed in hopes of curbing this loss.

Today, due largely to the work of the Save the Rhino Trust, estimates show that the numbers of black rhinos in the Kunene Region have doubled, and poaching has all but vanished. Save the Rhino Trust is now expanding its focus to include research on the habitat needs of the rhino, establishing land conservation measures to ensure long-term conservation of key rhino habitats and re-populating previously extirpated rhino ranges.

## Student Program

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Round River students join Namibian students, Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) and Round River researchers at remote field camps to work with local naturalists and rhino trackers. The research efforts focus on assisting with rhino population census efforts, gathering key data on rhino habitat preferences and gathering baseline ecological information in this remote region. Students will assist SRT in: 1) conducting black rhino re-introduction feasibility assessments within interested community conservancies, 2) developing a science-based rhino viewing protocol to minimize human-induced disturbance from tourist viewing and monitoring activities, 3) developing long-term regional biodiversity monitoring programs.

### In Memorandum

At press time for this catalog we received bad news that Mike Hearn passed away while in Namibia. He was a good friend and colleague to all of us at Round River, and an inspirational leader to the students that worked with him. Mike's absence will be felt by all involved with Round River and Save the Rhino Trust, and we offer this dedication to Mike and the passion he brought to working with the people of Namibia and its wildlife.



# ROUND RIVER

## CONSERVATION STUDIES

2005-2006

STUDENT PROGRAMS AND  
CONSERVATION PROJECTS



Dennis Sizemore

## From Trustee Rick Bass

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*"You do not have to be good. You do not have to  
walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the  
desert, repenting. You only have to let the soft animal  
of your body love what it loves.*

*Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on..."*

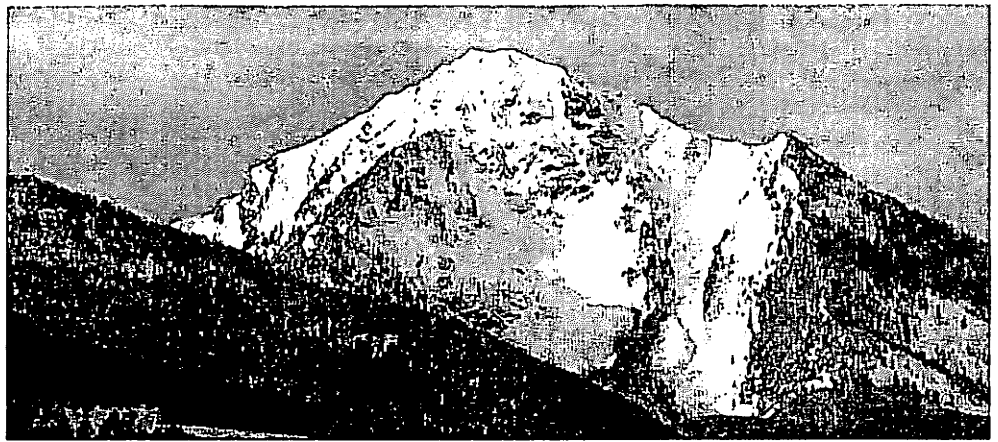
*— Mary Oliver, Wild Geese*

In these darkening days of de-regulation, when it seems that the hounds of unfettered and short-sighted commerce – let's call it what it is, greed and a kind of breathless violence – have been unleashed upon the last of the world's wild places, I am always encouraged and emboldened by the work of Round River. There is courage in the work they do, seeking to study and know, as best as can be known through all the senses – love included – these last and farthest wild places, in our own country as well as beyond. There is courage, too, in the community work they pursue for the human elements of these landscapes. We need all stripes and brands of environmentalists these days, now more than ever – in the path of the mindless juggernaut of a war-based economy, a little obstructionism may not always be a bad thing – but I personally am partial to those science and community based forms of activism which contain proposed solutions in addition to the obvious answers of *protect the last of the wild, love the last of the wild.*

Old forests in the Rocky Mountains are again being cut and our beloved Colorado Plateau is being broken apart for brown low-grade coal by corporate pirates such as the Carlyle Group (the barbarians have entered the gates). Yet the vision of Round River has over the last decade achieved numerous conservation successes, from the coast of British Columbia to the high forests of Arizona. Community forestry is being modeled in Ecuador, Black Rhinos and the effects of tourism are being studied in Namibia, and the territory of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation is being defended fiercely, and still remains whole, in northern British Columbia.

These accomplishments have been met by passionate and talented staff and instructors working as partners, not superiors, with passionate and talented students, on-the-ground and in-the-field, in the heartlands of wild country. I salute the places and projects where Round River has been active in the past, as well as their ongoing work, and I look forward with hope and what I want to believe is a thing like courage – the courage to love the world more deeply – to the areas where they will be working in the future. Thank you to all the hundreds who have participated in Round River in the past, and to those who will, in the coming years.

Rick Bass



*Dennis Sizemore*

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