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**NOTATE BENE!**

**This book contains lots of data on the two local species of rhinoceros in the various chapters!**

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## MALAWI- SOUTH AFRICA WILDLIFE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



Protected area management is an international responsibility and at times a multi-stakeholder effort is required in order to manage or even restore certain species of wildlife effectively. The case of the Liwonde National Park in Malawi, an initiative that began more than a decade ago, provides an example of this approach. Small populations of black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* had once occurred in Malawi's Kasungu National Park and Mwabvi Wildlife Reserve but by 1990 they were locally extinct. In that year, however, Malawi and South Africa signed the Liwonde Wildlife Development Project to focus on the Liwonde National Park of some 550 km<sup>2</sup>, situated on the Shire River, just to the south of Lake Malawi. Ties between Malawi under President Hastings Banda and the South African government had always been strong and this project pledged the South African National Parks Board (as it was then called) to help Malawi develop the Liwonde National Park.

Within two years, a number of aspects of national park development, funded by South Africa, had been completed. Modern visitor accommodation at Mvuu, and new staff quarters at Makanga were built. A section of electrified perimeter fence was constructed and staff were trained by SANParks. However, the challenge of relocating endangered or extinct species into the Liwonde National Park remained - rhinoceros in particular. One of the strategies of saving rhinoceros from extinction is to disperse individuals in a variety of localities so that were a disaster to occur in one place, others would survive elsewhere.

With South African expertise to help, in 1993, 1998 and 2000, three pairs of rhinoceros were translocated from South African national parks - one bull came from the North West Province. There have subsequently been deaths and births and presently the total rhinoceros population is eight. To enhance security the rhinoceros and other species introduced to Liwonde are to be kept in a separate enclosure until such time as the whole boundary has been fenced. A team of scouts called the 'Rhino Protection Unit' cares for these creatures. Although the first team was trained and equipped by SANParks, later recruits were locally trained and funded by the Frankfort Zoological Society. The rhinoceros have galvanised a great deal of interest in wildlife in Malawi and obtained the support of a number of non-governmental organisations. These include the J&B Circle whose 'Care for the Rare' campaign has raised funds and provided labour and equipment for the rhinoceros sanctuary, the USAID-funded Community Partnerships for Sustainable Natural Resources Management (COMPASS) and the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi.

SANParks and South African money have also been responsible for assisting Malawi's Department of National Parks and Wildlife to move animals within the borders of Malawi in order to stock Liwonde National Park which now contains 45 large mammal species. Translocation involved buffalo, eland, Lichtenstein's hartebeest, roan antelope and zebra, all of which came from the Kasungu National Park.

Not only has the Malawi-South Africa Wildlife Development Project had tangible benefits in upgrading infrastructure, building capacity in management and reintroducing wildlife species, but it has also provided the impetus for new role players to contribute to Malawi's protected areas. Liwonde's wildlife population is booming and the national park has become the country's major wildlife tourist destination.

Leonard D. Sefu



On several occasions SANParks helped to establish and develop protected areas by relocating animals from South Africa's national parks to restock elsewhere. Swaziland provides an early example of cross-border collaboration. The Kingdom of Swaziland has a traditional cultural attachment to lions *Panthera leo* and the African elephant *Loxodonta africana*. The male lion is the symbol of the king and one of his titles is *Ngwenyama* (the lion). The queen mother is referred to as *Ndlovukazi* (the Great She Elephant). Although these two species feature on the Swazi coat-of-arms, both were locally extinct within Swaziland by the 1950s. In 1972 Swaziland established the Swaziland National Trust Commission to modernise the conservation programme (Hackel & Carruthers 1993) and discussion began thereafter about how to reintroduce lion and elephant to the country. The outcome of this was that 15 years later a herd of 18 elephant were relocated to Swaziland by SANParks with financial and other assistance from Dr Anton Rupert, the South African philanthropist, and the Southern African Nature Foundation (now WWF-South Africa). At that time moving elephant, even young animals, was innovative, and before the large group was translocated, two young bulls were introduced to Hlane Royal National Park to ensure that the experiment would work. Because of the success with elephant, in 1994 lion were returned to Hlane, again as part of a joint operation between the three parties mentioned above.

In some instances animal species were exchanged in order to further the objectives of wildlife protection. For example, a founder population of Lichtenstein's hartebeest *Sigmoceros lichtensteini* were moved from the Kasungu National Park of Malawi into the Kruger National Park in 1986.

*The chain of coastal lakes and their connecting channels in the Wilderness National Park is another of South Africa's sixteen Ramsar sites. The lakes typically have clear water with dense fringing vegetation in which reeds, sedges and bulrushes are prominent. These lakes support thousands of Palearctic migrants but are also important for local waterbirds.*

where the species had last been recorded about a century before (Penzhorn 1985). This was followed in 1993 by translocating black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* from the Kruger National Park to Malawi's Liwonde National Park (see box). In 1998 four black rhinoceros (belonging to the East African subspecies *D. b. michaeli*) went from the Addo Elephant National Park to the Mkomazi Game Reserve in northern Tanzania, and a further four followed in 2000, both projects were financed by the Wildlife Preservation Trust of Tanzania. In a separate initiative, funded by the Frankfurt Zoological Society, two black rhinoceros females were moved from Addo to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, while a young orphaned bull was moved from Ngorongoro Crater to Addo. The idea behind this transfer was that when the young bull was old enough to breed, he would strengthen the gene pool of black rhinoceros of the East African subspecies that was being managed by SANParks as a discrete population. In the 1980s there was also a joint project between Namibian and SANParks personnel when a group of disease-free buffalo *Syncerus caffer* were taken from the Addo Elephant National Park to



SANParks has a stockpile of ivory kept in a secure store-room at Skukuza. The tusks were derived from natural mortality and from the past practice of culling excess elephants. A decision taken at the 2002 CITES Conference of Parties allows for the sale of this ivory if stringent controls and conditions are met. Funds so generated are to be spent on elephant protection, research and management.



establish a population in the Waterberg National Park of Namibia. In return, black rhinoceros of the southwestern subspecies *D. b. bicornis* were moved from Etosha National Park in northern Namibia to two national parks in South Africa: the Augrabies Falls National Park and the Vaalbos National Park (Raath and Hall-Martin 1989). These particular animals were the founders of what is today a population of 41 animals of this subspecies in South African national parks.

SANParks has also made a contribution to the transfer of wildlife management and conservation expertise to other countries, particularly – although not exclusively – in Africa. Many senior managers of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in Malawi received their practical training in the Kruger National Park in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Today, much of this kind of training is done at the Southern

African College of Wildlife Management at Orpen, on the western boundary of the Kruger National Park. Before the black rhinoceros were moved to Malawi (as explained above), a team of game scouts spent some months in the Kruger National Park doing their training, while SANParks conservation and technical staff have spent time in African countries like Malawi, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, helping to plan, develop and implement conservation projects. All these endeavours have provided two-way opportunities to build capacity and have encouraged the exchange of experiences and ideas around conservation issues.

SANParks's teams have long been recognised as leaders in the field of game capture and translocation and also in immobilising animals for research purposes. A particular strength in this regard has been the experience and skill of the professional helicopter pilots, who without doubt are the best in the world. A SANParks team undertook a major project in Côte d'Ivoire in 1993 when 189 animals of a variety of species were moved from Comoe National Park in the far north of the country to the Abokouamekro Park near Yamoussoukro, some 500km away. The species moved included roan antelope *Hippotragus equinus koba*, Defassa waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus defassa*, Buffon's kob *Kobus kob*, warthog *Phacochoerus africanus*, western hartebeest *Alcelaphus buselaphus major* and West African savannah buffalo *S. c. brachyceros*. The logistics of this project were daunting because all the capture equipment, including trucks and the helicopter, had to be shipped from South Africa to Abidjan and