

South West Africa (Owen-Smith):

In times gone by, black rhinos occurred throughout the country. By 1970, they had been exterminated south of the Ugab River; some remained in Etosha. Then, it is estimated that Kaokoland held between 40 and more than 120 rhinos (but estimates were surely under-estimates?), and a minimum of 100 in Damaraland. By 1982, only about five survived in Kaokoland (none confirmed in Marienfluss), and 40 to 45 in the concession zone of Damaraland and six on the farmland (outside of the "red line"). There has been individual identification of rhinos in Damaraland, and so far there are 40 known animals in the concession zone. Most known home ranges seem to be small.

Thus there has been a considerable decline in rhinos outside of Etosha in the years 1970 - 82, but there is no indication of disease being a cause. The years 1979 - 82 were the worst drought on record, during which three-quarters of the Kaokoveld's springbok, zebra and gemsbok died. But rhino calves were born in this period, they were also conceived in this period, and they survived. Thus drought is not a cause of the desert rhino's decline. In 1982/83, five calves were born. [But drought reduced the vegetation which caused the death of several rhinos by starvation - Joubert].

All rhinos in the east of Kaokoveld have disappeared; most of 40 carcasses found were poached (bullet holes, no horns). Today, the desert rhino survives only below the 100mm isohyet. It is not a unique subspecies, it is the same as Etosha rhinos, but a viable population in Damaraland will not survive two more years without protection. And to remove them would be to harm our cause - the Damaras consider the desert rhinos to be theirs, they are not out to kill them, indeed the Damara government has banned all hunting two years ago.

Addo Elephant National Park (Hall-Martin):

Animals of the michaeli subspecies were introduced from Kenya in the early 1960's. Unfortunately three minor bulls were added in 1977 which created the problem of genetic mixing of subspecies. However it is relatively easy to distinguish rhinos of the two subspecies from the air and from the ground - minor animals are smaller and have a smoother skin than do michaeli animals. In May 1981 two minor bulls were removed (the third had earlier been castrated) and in May 1983 three hybrid calves were captured and sent to the National Zoological Gardens (Pretoria).