

Report 2005

Report from Mkomazi 2005

2005 was an extraordinary year for The Mkomazi Project and the work of the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trusts in the field. The Government of Tanzania officially upgraded Mkomazi Game Reserve to National Park status and the hand-over to Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) commenced; a baby rhino was born in the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary; wild dog numbers recovered to 50 and the vaccination research was concluded; infrastructure development in the reserve continued apace, with ongoing roadwork, building of permanent ranger outposts in the field, dam desilting, aircraft patrols and the successful application of a tourist operator to build a tented camp in the reserve; the outreach work in the communities broadened its scope with educational and water projects and HRH Princess Michael of Kent became the Patron of the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust in the UK.

Running alongside these developments was a set of major challenges, and we thank our chairmen, trustees, friends and colleagues for all their advice and support. Brigadier General (Retd) Hashim Mbita, Bernard Mchomvu and Charles Dobie continued to steer the project with clarity and wisdom and, as always, we are grateful for their guidance. When the Wildlife Division and the Trust undertook The Mkomazi Project in 1988, a long and daunting task lay ahead. The rehabilitation of a devastated piece of land to its eventual recognition as one of Tanzania's National Parks, the rehabilitation of two of Africa's most endangered species and the pressing need to provide assistance to the communities surrounding the game reserve combined to represent a daunting project. It required not only a concentration of limited resources to the best effect, but also the renewal, revival and reversal of the damage of the previous years. We would like to thank everyone who has been involved in this project for helping us take it to this stage, for without such support it could not have been accomplished. On every level, the success this project enjoys has been a direct result of the voluntary support and goodwill of very many people. There still remains much to be done, and we hope we can rely on your support as the next stage unfolds.

Management

We have the great fortune to work alongside Mr Lusasi, the Wildlife Division's Project Manager of MGR. Together with him, the Wildlife Division and the Trust have shouldered the responsibility of developing the infrastructure of the reserve, and

thereby satisfying the Government's criteria for National Park status. We are all proud of the achievements of The Mkomazi Project, and look forward to the transition and upgrade to National Park status.

During the year, the return of 300 elephant in the Kisima area gave testimony to the relative peace that exists in the reserve. Brigadier General (Retd) Hashim I Mbita, Charles Dobie and Tony met with the Director of Wildlife, Emmanuel Severre, on a number of occasions to discuss the work in the field and the Trust's position within the transition to National Parks. Our new Agreement has also been presented to the Government of Tanzania. The Trust machinery was sent out during the year to construct new road networks and maintain old roads. The Fastrac and JCB, donated by Sir Anthony Bamford of JCB, are relied on to undertake this huge brief, and we would like to thank JCB for providing all the spare parts, enabling us to keep these machines well-maintained and in good condition. The grader was rebuilt in the workshop, an immense job which ultimately high-lighted the skills of the mechanics who are employed by the Trust. We are also grateful to IFAW for providing the much needed fuel for these machines to carry out the work.

In a joint project with the Wildlife Division, we desilted the Kavateta Dam, a massive undertaking, as it had not been properly de-silted for forty years. The Wildlife Division provided the money for fuel and the operator's wages, and the Trust sent in the JCB, with the 10 ton tipping trailer and dam scoop, donated by US Fish & Wildlife. The job was completed in record time and we are awaiting the long rains to see how much water the dam will hold.

Thanks to TUSK and the Born Free Foundation, the Trust was able to construct a permanent ranger outpost in the field at Kamakota. We were also able to upgrade the existing tented ranger outposts at Kifakua and Maore. These outposts are staffed by trust personnel but are also to be used by Wildlife Division personnel during ranger patrols. The outposts provide much needed security in three different areas of the reserve, as well as providing external security for the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary. Aircraft back-up with the Trust's Cessna 206, as well as vehicle fuel, were provided for the WD ranger patrols. HRH Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands funded the aircraft insurance, for which we were extremely grateful.

The Kenya Wildlife Services warden from Tsavo West National Park flew in for discussions with Mr Lusasi and Tony on the broader scope of patrols. Nick McWilliam, currently working on the British Antarctic Expedition, came back to Mkomazi to update the GPS map of the reserve. MWEKA College for African Wildlife Management

brought students in on three occasions for talks and field trips with the Trust personnel. It was a great pleasure to welcome Mr Musa Lyimo with the MWEKA students.

And on to tourism... George and Deb Mavroudis successfully applied to the Wildlife Division to build a tented camp in Mkomazi. This is a project that has needed tenacity and we are grateful to them for their perseverance. They have always been supportive of the goals of The Mkomazi Project and the work of Mr Lusasi and the Trust. The future of Mkomazi lies in its ability to become self-sustaining and we hope that this first step attracts the confidence and support of the tourist market.

Rhino

(Since this report was written, Elvis has died. Details are contained in the postscript)

On June 20th 2005, we received a radio call giving us long awaited news. Rose, one of the females from the original translocation in 1997, had given birth to a calf. Following a moment of stunned silence, we all breathed a collective sigh of relief. Our rather premature excitement soon turned to consternation, however. Another of the females from the first translocation, Charlie, (who has been described by Dr Piet Morkel as one of the most aggressive rhinos he has ever come across), had met the calf at a water hole and had tossed it into the air. This happened a couple of times, with the calf being thrown so forcefully that it did complete somersaults in the air, whilst the rhino sanctuary personnel dashed forward, risking their lives, to stop Charlie.

The solution was to prevent Charlie meeting the calf at this particular water hole, so all the existing water pans were filled up daily from then on. Paradoxically, Charlie, Rose and the calf often browse together, but it did throw into question the possibility of a previous calf mortality, although we shall never know. Despite these unscheduled acrobatics, the calf is in excellent health and it is monitored closely. Dr Piet Morkel visits regularly to check up on her. She is called Suzi! Ted Van Dam, the Managing Director of B V Nimag representing Suzuki in The Netherlands, started a Suzuki Rhino Club to support the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary, so we asked him to name her.

Elvis, one of the males from the second translocation, needed to be sedated for treatment to wounds he sustained through fighting. These wounds were deteriorating through further fights and general bashing around. Dr Piet Morkel flew

in with Peter and Stella Hitchins to work on Elvis. We would like to thank Frankfurt Zoological Society, for whom Dr Morkel works as technical advisor, for supporting his visits to Mkomazi.

Security systems were given a further boost when TUSK and the Born Free Foundation donated uniports for the external security outposts. TUSK also sourced army boots for sanctuary personnel. Extra anti-poaching training was given by Ian Maxwell. IFAW funded wages and fuel for the machines operating in the rhino sanctuary. Again, TUSK and the Born Free Foundation responded to a cry for help and donated a rotary grass slasher for road and fence-line maintenance. Chester Zoo and Save the Rhino funded a major replacement of fence posts, as did Edith Brinkers.

Ian Maxwell undertook anti-poaching training with the personnel. Thanks to Ted Van Dam and the Suzuki Club in The Netherlands, we now receive a critically important monthly donation towards the day to day running costs of the sanctuary. Bill Savoy visited for two days and generously supported the work, despite being charged by Elvis. Last year Chester Zoo and Save the Rhino donated funds for the construction of an observation bunker by a major water pan. This has proved to be invaluable for monitoring and observation. The first guests to venture down the steep steps and through the rather flimsy wooden doors were rhinos. Individually, they all spent a couple of hours in there staring out, before climbing back up, at which point a huge steel armoury door was swiftly ordered up and put in place. It is a captivating experience to stand in the bunker and watch these mighty animals drinking in such close proximity, unaware of our presence, although the number of men who dashed out of the bunker to stop Charlie tossing the calf must have given the game away!

The Scania water tanker, donated by HRH Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands and the Friends of Serengeti, trundles over to the Zange HQ every day to collect water for the rhino sanctuary. This is an arduous and costly journey, so US Fish & Wildlife donated funds for a hydro-geophysical survey and subsequent drilling and sinking of a borehole in the rhino sanctuary area. Three holes were drilled but we found that only one had small / poor potential. It still has to be pump-tested but it was somewhat disappointing, especially as the rains failed this year.

Tony made a presentation to the Suzuki dealers in The Netherlands to encourage their support, and a group of 85 of them visited in early 2006. Ted Van Dam organised a group of 40 Suzuki motorbike dealers to visit the project in 2005, all on motorbikes, and they gave a very generous donation. Tony also met with James

Osborne and Amos Courage of the Port Lympne Wildlife Park in England who hold the correct sub-species of rhino (*D.b.michaeli*) to continue discussion of the possibility of a translocation to Mkomazi. The conservation director and chief curator of Chester Zoo, Roger Wilkinson and Mark Pilgrim, visited with Dave Stirling of Save the Rhino and we were delighted to be able to show them the progress that has taken place.

We continue to be very grateful to everyone who has contributed towards the professional management of the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary. We have repeatedly received congratulations from so many colleagues both on the project and the dedication and integrity of the sanctuary personnel. We are grateful to Semu Pallangyo who oversees the day to day operations.

Postscript to report - message from camp

In early January 2006, Elvis had a fight with another male which resulted in some injuries to his testicle area. However, on January 17th, he fought again with the same rhino and got injured further. Dr Piet Morkel flew in on January 18th with two other rhino vets, and they sedated Elvis, treated his wounds and swollen / infected areas, cleaned him up, administered antibiotics, sprayed him and greased him down (to prevent ticks from burrowing themselves in his wounds).

On February 24th he had a brief fight with the other male, Jonah. On February 28th, he fought with both Jonah and then James. He was badly injured and ended up on his back with all four legs poking up into the air. Unfortunately, he was one of those rhinos who would fight until he was down, and then he would get back up and go after his attacker again - and start another fight.

We decided to sedate and treat him again, and separate him into his own section of the rhino sanctuary to give him time and isolation to recover.

Piet Morkel flew in again the next day (Wednesday 1st March) to assess the situation. He returned to the Ngorongoro Crater that night to collect the appropriate medicines. Piet returned on Thursday 2nd March with another vet, and we undertook the operation to move Elvis into his own section whilst sedated. He had more wounds to his stomach, ribs and genitalia. He was treated again.

On 5th March, he broke out of his own section through the gate over a cattle grid (which we had been told was rhino-proof) and went back into the main rhino

sanctuary. Thankfully there were no fights and the rhino sanctuary personnel managed to persuade him back into his isolation section on 8th March.

From that day on, his condition appeared to improve steadily. However, on on March 16th, he fell over onto his side, much to our horror. Sanctuary personnel pulled him up again with ropes. He was given 24 hour care and again appeared to improve, even charging one of his keepers. He fell down again on 22nd March. Sanctuary personnel hand-fed him (including glucose treatment) and kept him propped up in the normal sleeping position (legs tucked under him).

On 23rd March, he died in the afternoon.

Wild dogs

As always, our thanks to Dr Aart Visee for overseeing the African wild dog programme and for planning the methods by which it is carried out. We have learnt an enormous amount over the years and we hope that our findings and our data will be of use to those involved in the preservation of this critically endangered species. Aart's veterinary work, academic research, immaculate records, support and advice have been of crucial importance to this project. We must also thank George and Natasha Duffield for their wonderful generosity in supporting the costs of the programme for two years.

Breeding in the established third and fourth pack finally took place in December 2004. As a result, 2005 proved to be a successful year with some remarkable results. We started with 29 dogs and finished with 50, proving once again that numbers can grow quickly with the species. Four litters were born; the Kisima and Lendenai compounds had one litter each, and we were taken by surprise when the newly established pack in the Ayubu compound had two litters. Zawadi, the alpha female in the Lendenai compound, gave birth to 9 male pups in 2004 and to 5 male pups in 2005. Both litters will be excellent re-introduction parties for the future, and the first litter of 9 males has already been isolated awaiting re-introduction.

The alpha female in the Ayubu compound gave birth to a litter and to our surprise, the beta female in the same compound also gave birth. This is rather unusual but not completely unknown. Probably due to the fact that there was a gap of three months between the deliveries, and thus the pups of the alpha female were weaned when the beta female's pups were born, there were no problems in raising the beta litter.

The vaccination research for canine distemper and rabies came to a conclusion. The newly used distemper vaccine proved to be successful and there was no need to have the participation of the dogs of the first born litters, following the distemper outbreak in 2001. The main problem is that the new vaccine is only available on an irregular basis. The rabies research in the Mkomazi dogs has brought new insights into the rabies vaccination policy for the African wild dog. When we started the programme, it was said that rabies vaccinations did not work in the species. Thanks to our research, it is now known that African wild dogs have to be vaccinated three times instead of once for the vaccinations to work. Veterinary data will be published in the 2001 - 2005 veterinary report.

Aart and Dr Hoyer of the Amsterdam Zoo have written a draft paper on Distemper Vaccinations in the Wild Dog. A paper has been written on the Genetic Analysis of the African Wild Dog in The Mkomazi Project 1995 - 2004 by Dr Kappe of Gendika, the laboratory who undertook the DNA analysis of the dogs. The conclusion was that "There is considerable genetic variation in the African Wild Dog population in The Mkomazi Project." It is this genetic variation that will satisfy the requirements for re-introduction.

The breeding pairs will stay here at Kisima, and their offspring will be released into areas where they have the most chance of success. Important discussions with the relevant Government authorities are underway to gain permission to start re-introductions. Pending these negotiations, a small start was made with moving 4 brothers from the Kisima compound to the rhino sanctuary. They were housed in the old compound of Jipe, the lioness. Due to the absence of lions in the rhino sanctuary there are abundant prey species for the wild dogs. This interim release was to give both wild dogs and personnel the experience prior to the larger re-introductions. On the morning of their release, they wandered out of the compound, came back in again to flop into their waterpans, and then they were off. The first ambition - just to run and hunt, they did successfully, and have done most days since. Tony drove out the day after the release and found them resting up with full stomachs. Two of the dogs are collared so we have the ability to track them. A profound sense of joy accompanied their release, more so for the dogs than for us, but to watch them in their new-found freedom and to see how skillfully they hunt with no previous experience is extraordinary. We can also determine from this how quickly they can break the link with humans, gain physical fitness and, most critically, gain hunting experience. Sangito Lema and Ayubu Mbise, the wild dog keepers, continue to maintain the programme to a high standard.

Trust, trustees, travel and supporters

It has been a period of great loss. Very sadly, the Patron of the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust in Holland, HRH Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands, died at the age of 93. PB, as he liked to be known, met Tony back in 1978 and the award to Tony by PB of the Golden Ark was a mark of a long standing friendship. He was also very generous to the project with financial support in several critical areas.

Shortly before going to print, we were devastated to learn of the death of Dr Keith Eltringham in January. Chairman of GAWPT for over 20 years, his support and knowledge as Professor of Zoology at Cambridge University was unsurpassed and we shall miss him greatly as an expert and as a friend. He was always a voice of reason and his confidence in Tony and the project never wavered.

One of our Trustees in Tanzania, Costa Mlay, has also died. Costa was an extraordinary conservationist and a great help to our work in Mkomazi. He was a former Director of Wildlife and was a principal force in upgrading the elephant onto Appendix 1 of the endangered species list.

Tony was invited by TUSK to give the 10th anniversary AMEX presentation at the Royal Geographical Society in London. He also took part in a discussion forum on wildlife with Olly and Suzi at the Royal Institution in London. Trust board meetings took place in the UK, USA, Kenya, Germany, Holland and Tanzania and Tony travelled to Harare to visit the Chairman of our Tanzanian Trust, Brigadier General (Retd) Hashim I Mbita , Tanzania's Ambassador to Zimbabwe.

We were all thrilled and honoured when HRH Princess Michael of Kent officially became the Patron of the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust in England. Princess Michael has been extremely supportive of the work of the Trust for many years and has given invaluable help, not only in enhancing the profile of the Trust but also enabling us to broaden our fundraising base. She has visited camp on a number of occasions and we look forward to seeing her again in the future. There are many organisations and individuals, worldwide, who support us financially or in materials and advice. We can probably never thank them all properly but we are grateful for their input in whatever form it takes. Thanks must also go to our Operations Manager, Elisaria Nnko, and all the Tanzanians who work here, out in the field, in the base camp, workshop, rhino sanctuary, wild dog programme or outreach programme, whose dedication and commitment to this project is unparalleled. Sincere thanks go to the chairmen, treasurers, trustees, board directors and

administrators of all the trusts, whose guidance and support has taken the project forwards to the formidable undertaking that it is today.

Outreach

The Trust continues to support projects for the communities surrounding the reserve. Our main focus is educational assistance, although this year we have helped out on water projects in rural areas. We are very grateful to Elisaria Nnko, who heads up the Outreach Programme on behalf of the Trust.

In Kavumbugu Village, Same District, the Trust donated a water pump to the villagers for their water project and rural dam. Following a request from the MP for Same, John Singo, and the Ministry of Agriculture, we sent the Trust's plant, machinery and operators (JCB, dam scoop and 10 ton tipping trailer) to three villages on the outside the reserve, Nadururu, Kinshaa and Njiro, to desilt their dams. As a result the dams now hold a considerable amount of water for cattle and village use.

Through the support of TUSK and the George Adamson Trust in Germany we were able to make large donations of cement and corrugated iron roofing sheets to Vudee Secondary School, Vumari Secondary School and Madeveni Secondary School in Same District. The handover of cement and roofing sheets to these three schools was attended by villagers, Government officials, school officials and the Tanzanian national press. We thank Bernard Mchomvu for his commitment to Vumari Secondary School and for encouraging us to make two donations of cement over a period of months.

Tony was invited to be Guest of Honour at the Graduation Day for Hedaru Secondary School in Same District. Semu Pallangyo who heads up the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary, represented the Trust as Guest of Honour at the Graduation Day for Shighatini Secondary School in Mwangi District. The students of Kisiwani Secondary School visited to look at the work of the technicians and mechanics in the workshop at Kisima Camp. The Trust also lent the JCB and operator to the Same District Council and village elders of Vumari village, to help clear a new road from Same to Vumari and further on up the mountain. The District Commissioner, Mr Ferdinand Mkude, also asked for fuel assistance for his work within the District and we were glad to be able to help. The Regional Commissioner, Mrs Hilda Ngoye, held a meeting in Same to secure funds for renovations and construction of a women's hostel, and the Trust assisted with a large donation of cement.

In 1993, GAWPT paid for the survey and sinking of a borehole at Zange HQ. In 2002, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and the Wildlife Division paid for electricity to be brought down from the main road down to the Zange HQ. Once the electricity was connected, GAWPT paid for a water pump for the original borehole. The villagers of Majevu village continue to collect water from Zange twice weekly, saving them the long journey into Same town (the only other water source) on foot. A collective thank you to TUSK, Moritz Borman, Matthias Deyle, Antoinette Hiebler-Hassner, Dr Florian Hassner, Jorg Weizendorfer, Mo Schlattner, Stefan von Moers, Hubertus Prinz von Hohenzollem and Simone Motzko for taking on the responsibility of the Outreach Programme and thereby enabling us to make significant contributions to the educational needs of the villagers.

Nina

Nina, the elephant we rehabilitated to the wild after 27 years in a zoo, is now 36 years old. Her calf, Jonny Wilkinson (born on the day that England won the Rugby World Cup), is over 2 years old and in very good health. In the dry season, they are accompanied by five males who come with them to drink from the water pan in the workshop. A world first!