

MIDLANDS BLACK RHINO CONSERVANCY TRUST

(Registered No. W.O. 13/92)

6416

NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2001

We all hope your Christmas was a peaceful one and that the new year is good to you all. The situation in our country and the Midlands has not changed much and still unsettling. In December a Kwe Kwe farmer and friend, to most of us, was gunned down whilst opening a gate. His son will be in hospital for some time. The "war veterans" continue to move on and off properties. I regret to say that the bike ride had to be postponed again, due to the growing concern over the situation with the war veterans. I make mention that on Mopani Park Farm one of our sturdy rhino decided that his territory was being encroached on and took swift action in the form of a charge, narrowly missing his target - a war veteran. This created a great deal of concern to the new inhabitants.

Early January we said a sad farewell to our Conservator, Pierre Favier. We welcome Ferdie Terblanche who has worked with wildlife in South Africa.

Inhabitants continue to threaten the security. Our Conservator is working on new ways to control the poaching and snaring of game (the rhino are still safe). We have a new monitor enabling us to cover more ground. Great excitement since our May Newsletter - Rosalinde had a calf in May and Mkai in August (born on Pitscottie) named Sihle (meaning Nice). Mkai has now given us 3 calves, 2 female and the last not sexed yet. This brings our total to 57. 23 male, 30 female and 4 calves. Our growth rate is 6,8% for the moment. Sightings of unknown rhino have been seen. We are devising a new method of monitoring which we feel will improve our present system. Before Pierre left he had been out in the field taking as many photographs as possible. Unfortunately Chitatu has been illusive!! We will not give up. Please let us know if you'd like a photo of your adopted rhino. We had lovely rains in November but very hot and dry at the present time.

Our Chairman, Monitor and Conservator attended a Management Meeting/Rhino Workshop in Harare, for all Conservancies and National Parks. Many points of interest were brought up i.e. interesting in that the scrapings from a rhino horn can show the area they have come from. The IUCN (United Nations Body) - a regional programme for rhino conservation, funded by the Italian Government and implemented by SADC, WWF and CESUI (Italian). Objects are to co-ordinate and plan committees, status reporting and surveys, management and monitoring, capacity and community participation.

In August Dr John Gripper (Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust - UK), visited us to check on the security situation in the Midlands Conservancy. The sponsors are extremely worried and anxious to know how the situation is affecting the rhino. Law and Order is essential to the donors overseas. Dr Gripper said we had to look at the longterm future and where the next few years will take us. He said it was difficult to raise money because of the situation in the country. The SBRT purchased a motorbike and helmet for our Conservator for which we are very grateful.

Annie Gripper had a nasty accident and has been in hospital in the UK recuperating. We all wish her a speedy recovery!!

We have lost a great deal of income because of the ongoing situation in the country and hope that things improve in the next presidential election. Film crews and Safari clients have cancelled. All we can do is continue to do the best we can. We desperately need additional funds in enhancing our security team. We have a few more fundraising ideas for the near future and will enlighten you once they take place.

The Black Rhino have settled considerably well in the Midlands To this end we are employing additional scouts and monitors. If you can offer help in any way we would be most grateful to hear from you. Our habitat had always been considered inferior but our breeding percentage has been incredible. We feel it is necessary for better identification of the rhino and are working on this. The collar is insufficient for various reasons - i.e. the batteries run low and due to the physical features of the rhino, the collars do not stay on.

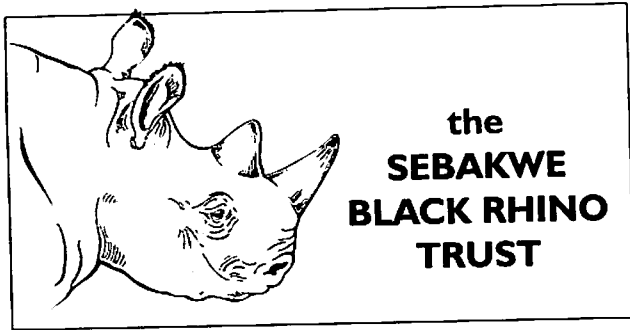
The cost of postage recently went up by 400%, this makes it very difficult for us to send out long and frequent newsletters. Therefore we will keep them short, with the latest upto date information on the Conservancy.

Once again, thank you to all our kind and generous donors. Dr and Annie Gripper once again for their kind donation and for the motorbike and continued support. Thankyou to those who bought medallions. Thanks go to Pierre Favier for all his hard work and dedication - we wish him all the very best. To Eleanor Lowe for her volunteer work which includes the monitoring, reports and records.

Should any of you know of someone who would like to adopt one of our magnificent Black Rhino, adult or baby, or to purchase a Medallion (limited), please contact us at one of the addresses below. Again thankyou for your support - stay in touch...

e-mail : tsigasango@global.co.zw
e-mail : b3sebsaf@globalzim.net
e-mail : mazuru @ global . co . zw - *Mazuru*
postal : The Secretary, P O Box 983, Kwe Kwe, Zimbabwe

*Let me know if you ever
come to Zim!
Regards, Mazuru.*



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28th June 2000

Dear Rhino Friend,

I know that you have all been watching events unfold in Zimbabwe with great concern for family and friends who are living in that country. The last three months have been anxious for us all with political unrest and a break down of law and order, during which time the country has been heading for economic disaster.

The issue of Land Reform has been a cynical political weapon used by President Mugabe and his ruling party in a desperate attempt to hold onto power following his defeat at the Referendum. Following the Election with the formation of a strong political opposition, it is hoped that a new power sharing government can restore law and order along with a return of international confidence in the country..

Zimbabwe has rising inflation, unemployment is a growing problem, AIDS is rampant, tourism has virtually ceased, exports of tobacco and farm produce are declining. There is an acute lack of foreign exchange, which is causing shortages of petrol and other essential imports. Without international help the country will become bankrupt.

The invasion of the farms by squatters, so called "war veterans", has resulted in intimidation and violence to the farmers and their workers. The squatters have demanded food, transport, alcohol and money and prevented the farms carrying on their normal work. These actions have caused great fear and uncertainty for the future. Sadly, some of the farmers with young families will be leaving the country for good.

Squatters have occupied most of the farms in the Midlands Conservancy but their activities have been kept under control and thankfully we have not had the high degree of violence and intimidation seen in other rural areas. Despite all the problems, the farmers and their guards along with our rapid reaction force have been able to continue to monitor and fully protect the 50 black rhino in the Conservancy.

Amid all the doom and gloom we have one good piece of news – there have been three new rhino births this year, – the latest is from Tapiwa on Bemthree who has produced a calf just two years after her first calf. This high level of fertility is further proof that the Conservancy has excellent rhino habitat.

Circle G and a smaller farm on the edge of the Conservancy have been designated for resettlement. Once political stability has been restored, we will resume negotiations with Government and National Parks to try and retain this land within the Conservancy. I will send you a further progress report in our Autumn Newsletter. Thank you for your continued support.

Yours Sincerely

John Gripper

Registered Charity No 328461

TRUSTEES:

John Gripper (Chairman), Peter Borton, Annie Gripper, Ray Gripper (Zimbabwe), David Ellman-Brown (Zimbabwe)

PATRONS:

Pam Ayres, Heather Brown, Dr Jane Goodall, Anna Merz, Malcolm Penny, Julian Pettifer, Dudley Russell, Tony Soper, Bob Swift