

# Rhino Museum

*A call for more donations*

**T**he first ever Rhino Museum to be established in Africa has caused quite a stir amongst our friends and the media.

The old "Melkrivier" school is majestically being transformed into an Environmental Education Centre which would incorporate the Rhino Museum.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone that has supported this initiative to date. The many generous donations and sponsorships received from organisations and individuals need to be noted:

- ⇒ PJ's Printing and Mailing Services for the printing and repro of appeal brochures and museum letterheads.
- ⇒ Leba Jaffe and Reuben Lifschitz for the donation of artefacts and books. Mr Lifschitz has a priceless collection of books, many of which are complete ranges of encyclopaedia. If you are interested in purchasing books, please contact him at (011) 786-6787.
- ⇒ Mr Mike Clark of Vadek Paints for the donation of paint.
- ⇒ First National Bank
- Guillemot Business Forms (Pty) Ltd
- It's Africa
- JCI Limited
- Mabula Game Lodge
- Motor Industry Fund Administrators (Pty) Ltd
- Murray & Roberts
- Natal Game Ranchers' Association
- Natal Game Marketing Association
- Pick 'n Pay Retail
- Richard's Bay Minerals
- Roedean School
- Sappi Limited
- University of Pretoria, Centre for Wildlife Management
- Wild Things
- The Wilderness Foundation
- ⇒ Mr Colin Bell
- Prof K Bothma
- Prof J du P Bothma
- Mrs Fiona Capstick
- Dr P A de Villiers
- Prof Fritz Eloff
- Ms R A Harvey
- Ms Pamela A Janse van Rensburg
- Mr Jerry Keating
- Mr Michael D. Kock
- Mr Paul Kotschy
- Dr M B Richter
- Mr Hendrik van Heerden
- Mr Peter D von Geusau
- Mr P Warrenner
- Mr M Wilson

***Please pledge your support.***

For assistance, contact Lucinda Scholtz at (011) 453-9834.

# Report back on CITES

**T**he main issues discussed in the corridors at the Conference concerned whales, bears and elephants. Very little was said about white rhino, although Dr George Hughes from the South African delegation presented a convincing argument at a press conference, which was very well attended. The overall impression of the Conference is that it is a political forum, with countries often more concerned about monetary contributions from foreign donor countries than about conservation issues. A continuous process of lobbying for votes for or against proposals went on, with some countries (dependent on foreign aid), changing their stand almost daily, depending on to whom they last spoke.

## ***The South African proposal:***

### **The white rhino**

The proposal from South Africa at the 10th Conference of Parties (COP10) was to remove the restrictions placed on the Southern African White Rhinoceros at COP9. South Africa asked for a zero quota, meaning that no actual trade would be conducted until the next Conference.

### **The result**

The proposal by South Africa to legalise trade in rhino products was rejected by one vote on 18 June, with 60 in favour of and only 32 against. As some parties without voting rights participated in the vote, SA appealed against the decision and requested a second vote, this time by secret ballot. It was thought that this would allow some countries, eg. from the European Union, to vote in favour of the proposal despite the general European opposition to trade in white rhino products.

It thus came as a shock when in the second voting on 19 June, by secret ballot, the proposal was rejected with 54 votes for, and 48 votes against - far from a two third majority.

## ***Proposals by Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana:***

### **The elephant**

The above-mentioned countries put individual proposals forward to down list the African elephant populations to Appendix II so that they could legally resume a restricted trade in ivory. Only stockpiled tusks would be used in the trade and only one trading partner, Japan, would be considered.

## **The result**

Before voting on 17 June, South Africa proposed to treat the separate applications as one proposal, with the following amendments to the proposal:

- ◆ Allow trade in trophies, live specimens and raw ivory for all three countries.
- ◆ Allow trade in hides and leather, as well as ivory products for non-commercial purposes for Zimbabwe.
- ◆ Form an investigation panel from range states to work alongside with the CITES panel of experts on the issue of controls.
- ◆ Postpone trade for 18 months, after which the following quota can be sold - Botswana 25.3 tons, Namibia 13.8 tons and Zimbabwe 20 tons.

This proposal was rejected, but was only three votes short of a two thirds majority, with 75 votes in favour and only 41 against.

Two days later, the original three proposals were laid before the Conference again, with an amendment that trade would be postponed by 18 months for each country respectively. This time around all three proposals were accepted by the required two thirds majority.

## **Discussion**

The poor performance of the South African rhino proposal was very disappointing, especially after the narrow defeat of the first proposal.

The results of the voting showed a strong support for sustainable use of natural resources. Much concern, however, was raised about the trade in white rhino products, such as horn for the medicinal market in the Far East. Despite the fact that our populations are productive and growing to such an extent that rhinos have to be removed annually from Kwazulu/Natal game reserves to prevent overpopulation and habitat degradation, the concerns of the opposing parties were that a legal trade could result in an increased poaching effort on other populations. The same arguments were used to oppose the trade in ivory.

Despite very strong undertakings that all necessary control measures will be implemented to prevent illegal products to enter the legal market, the opposing parties would not agree to at least give the system a chance to prove itself. All these arguments against the proposals showed that the parties are not willing to reward sound management efforts. Especially the larger non-African, developed countries like the USA, Australia and the European Union countries, who ironically do not have any elephants themselves, were very strong in their condemnation of the proposals. This raises suspicions that their motives are politically orientated, since large proportions of their constituents are animal rightists.  
**Daan Buijs**

# **Obituary Nick Steele**

Nick Steele came from a long line of distinguished Natal Parks Board wardens and was part of the original team led by Ian Player, back in the sixties, when the Natal Parks Board embarked upon the capture and translocation of the white rhinoceros. This was to be the forerunner of the most successful conservation exercise ever carried out in Africa and ensured the long-term survival of the species. Nick Steele, together with many other outstanding men, established forever the reputation that the Natal Parks Board enjoys to this very day.

I first made the acquaintance of Nick in 1987 when we were both en route to the World Wilderness Congress in Colorado in the United States. He was a great believer in the wilderness concept and did much to develop the wildlife areas that came under his control.

Our paths crossed again when he initiated the first security workshop held at Treasure Beach, dealing with aspects related to the poaching of both rhinos and elephants. He was to become the Chairman of the Rhino Management Group Security Committee which became the Rhino & Elephant Security Group. He succeeded in bringing not only the various conservation authorities in South Africa into the group, but countries such as Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia.

The Rhino & Elephant Foundation supported the Group from its inception and for the last five years, I have represented the private landowner at their meetings, dealing with the serious threats posed by elephant and rhinoceros poaching. In an area that is otherwise generally very suspicious of everyone and everything, Nick Steele was able to draw out the best in all concerned in a most exemplary, cooperative manner. Meetings were always punctuated by an open, honest approach, which resulted in considerable cooperation amongst all concerned. He was also responsible for initiating the Master Strategy for the security of both rhinos and elephants and was furthermore responsible for having Ian Thomson seconded from the KwaZulu Conservation Department as the Coordinator.

When the history of rhinoceros conservation is one day written, Nick Steele's name will be prominent, for he represented the true spirit of Africa's game ranger with his strong sense of duty, integrity, honesty and compassion for an animal that he loved a great deal. The African conservation world is diminished by his passing, but he holds out a beacon of light as an example to all of Africa's game rangers.

**Clive Walker**