

Dr Holly Dublin, Chairperson of the African Elephant Specialist Group, was the guest of the Chairman on a visit to Lapalala, the Tuli Block and the Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve in the Northern Province. Useful discussions took place, especially in the area of Marion Garai's work which again dealt with issues regarding translocated elephants.

REF is most grateful to Trustee John Ilsey, under whose able direction the Foundation continued the policy of consolidation, assisted by Petra Mengel.

Rozanne Savory resigned from her position as Executive Officer to join the National Parks Board Elephant Relocation Project and Petra Mengel has joined Blythe Loutit's Save The Rhino Trust in Namibia.

Heather Cowie has taken over as the REF Executive Officer and Monique Verduyn was recently appointed Public Relations and Marketing Officer.

The REF office has moved to The Wilderness Trust Office at Shop 11, Glendower Place Shopping Centre, 99 Linksfield Road, Glendower.

Under the direction of Rozanne Savory a spectacularly successful Gala Benefit was held in June, at which David Shepherd was the Guest Speaker. The occasion served to heighten public awareness of rhinos and elephants and raised a good sum of money. Fund-raising has continued to be of concern to the Foundation and we have not been as successful in this area as was hoped. There are a number of reasons for this, not least of which is the change in society's attitudes towards conservation versus people.

The concern regarding Africa's rhinos remains extremely high. Generally the situation across

Africa has improved, although both private and state controlled reserves within South Africa have lost rhinos. The matter will for the foreseeable future, remain of great concern and the Foundation can continue to play an important role.

It is certain that government agencies are going to increasingly see budget cuts to conservation and the importance of a non-governmental organisation providing funding where it is most urgently needed and continuing to maintain public awareness about the plight facing rhinos cannot be overstated.

If you would like more information on REF, contact us at ☎ (011) 453-7648, Fax (011) 453-7649, or write to P O Box 381, Bedfordview, 2008.

since the 1970's, and black rhinos since 1990.

The rhino populations on private land can make a considerable contribution to overall conservation strategies, and the Rhino and Elephant Foundation contacted Daan Buijs in 1987 to conduct a survey on white rhinos outside official conservation areas. A subsequent survey was carried out by Richard Emslie in 1994.

The original survey traced and recorded the histories of all translocations of white rhino from Natal Provincial Game Reserves, Bop Parks, and private sales. Contrary to popular (and often official) belief, a substantial number of these translocations were not as successful as expected. Various reasons for this were identified, and the findings were instrumental in the revision of Natal Parks Board allocation and pricing strategies.

In the last few decades, black rhino numbers in other African countries have declined alarmingly, and the few remaining animals enjoy intensive protection.

These factors have led to an increase in poaching of white rhino in South African Parks and Reserves. As tougher anti-poaching measures were implemented in these protected areas, poachers have recently turned their attention to rhinos on private land.

Many white rhinos have changed hands through auctions and private sales. The present status of white rhino on private land is thus largely

## Survey - Rhinos On Private Land

South Africa has gained international acclaim for its efforts to conserve both black and white rhinoceroses, which have brought these animals back from the brink of extinction. These efforts have enabled official nature conservation agencies, especially the Natal Parks Board, to sell surplus white rhinos to private land owners



*Rhino translocations on private land require qualified and experienced personnel. Dr Richard Burroughs, a vet in private practice, prepares to revive a white rhino.*

unknown. Before the 1987 survey, no black rhinos were present on private land. Since 1990, however, groups of five black rhinos have been auctioned annually by the Natal Parks Board to selected bidders.

These populations are increasing and active management of the earlier founder populations will soon become necessary in order to remove mature bulls and rectify skewed sex ratios. This would also prevent mortalities caused by breeding-related aggression.

These factors, as well as the build-up to the next CITES meeting in 1997 - where the listing of rhinos and trading in rhino products are sure to be discussed - have necessitated a new survey to establish the present status of rhinos on private land. The African Rhino Owners Association (AROA) has initiated and undertaken to obtain sponsorship for the 1996 survey.

The aims of the survey are to contribute to rhino conservation through the establishment of rhino management guidelines, to gauge the opinion of rhino owners on responsible utilisation of both black and white rhinos, and to provide official nature conservation authorities, IUCN Rhino Specialist Group and the South African CITES authority, with accurate information.

The Mazda Wildlife Fund has kindly provided a vehicle for the duration of the project and the Rhino & Elephant Foundation, Lapalala Wilderness, the Natal Game Marketing Association, WWF and Thabo Tholo have made generous contributions to AROA for the survey.

Daan Bujs of the African Wildlife Management Unit of the ARC - Range and Forage Institute will again supervise the project, with the help of Theo Papenfus, a B.Sc. Honours graduate in wildlife management, who will conduct the field work. The institute will also provide the infrastructure and computer facilities necessary for this important survey.

## **Bid To Save Africa's Northern White Rhino From Extinction**

The fate of Africa's northern white rhinoceros, *Ceratotherium simum cottoni*, hangs in the balance as it is on the very brink of extinction. According to Dr Martin Brooks, Chairman of the IUCN's African Rhino Specialist Group, there are less than 40 surviving northern white rhino left on earth. Garamba National Park in Zaire is home to the last remaining wild population of which there are only 29. Dr Brooks, the Natal Parks Board Head of Scientific Services, chaired a workshop towards the end of 1995 in Florida, USA, where major stakeholders met to develop a conservation strategy to improve the chances of survival of the sub-species.

As an outcome of the three-day workshop, conservation authorities in Zaire agreed in principle to work closely with the specialist group in planning for a second wild population of northern white rhino elsewhere in Africa.

A further nine northern white rhino are held in captivity at the Dvur Kralove Zoo in the Czech Republic, and four at the San Diego Zoo in California. However, these are not currently breeding. Both zoos have committed themselves to assisting in plans to save the sub-species from extinction. Two females will be flown back from the US to join the nucleus group in the Czech Republic. These animals are to be moved into a more free-ranging situation where conditions will hopefully stimulate breeding. The critical population status of the northern white rhinoceros echoes that of its southern counterpart 100 years ago. Due to successful conservation efforts of the Natal Parks Board, Africa's southern white rhino, *Ceratotherium simum simum*, now numbers close on 7 500 in the wild from less than 30 in 1895. Of these, approximately 7 100 are in South Africa.

## **Would-Be Poachers No Match For NPB**

Following a tip-off the Natal Parks Boards crack anti-poaching team apprehended and arrested two would-be rhino poachers in the Umfolozi Section of the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park on 23 March. An AK47 rifle, magazine, 15 rounds of ammunition and an axe were seized at the scene of the incident.

Charges were laid against the two individuals for unauthorised entry into the reserve; entering parts of the reserve not open to

the public; possession of undeclared weapons in the reserve and attempting to hunt animals in the reserve. A court case is pending.

Tony Conway, Chief Conservator Zululand, expressed satisfaction with the successful apprehension of the poachers without any rhino losses. It is now extremely difficult for poachers to enter our parks and poach with any success, he said.

The Natal Parks Boards Anti Poaching Unit works closely in conjunction with the SAPS's Endangered Species Protection Unit (ESPU), the Internal Stability Unit (ISU) and the SAPS Dog Unit who were put on standby at the time of the incident.