

# New Concept In Raising Funds For Rhino Conservation

*Save The Rhino International has been operating in the UK for six years, and has raised over R2 500 000 for rhino conservation projects in Asia and Africa.*

The charity was born when David Stirling and Johnny Roberts, both 24 at the time, returned from two years of travelling and working in Africa. The "Rhino Scramble", a motorcycle expedition from Nairobi to London was the first fundraising event and its success led David and Johnny to believe that there was more they could do for the world's devastated rhino population.

When a friend approached them with the idea of running the London Marathon in a large rhino costume, they said "Fine. As long as you wear it!" The costume had been designed by famous caricaturist Gerald Searfe for an opera production and had never been intended for any other use - it was now about to embark on a new career.

William Todd Jones completed that first marathon in over six hours, wearing a pair of hard office shoes just to add to his already significant challenge. The response was incredible - a novel and exciting concept in fundraising was born and Save The Rhino had discovered its greatest asset.

Since that first race, the rhino has run in 14 international marathons with a new face inside entertaining the crowds each time. Hundreds of runners have joined the SRI team, and each has raised R5 000 in personal sponsorship, thus making this a highly successful form of fundraising.

From its grounding as a marathon runner, the costume has taken on increasingly more exciting challenges and entertained followers at festivals and schools, at exhibitions and on the streets.

The 1994 climb up Mount Kilimanjaro proved its single biggest challenge and it became the first rhino to scale the snowy peak. The journey brought great joy to the villages en route from Mombassa and the R350 000 that was raised is still being spent on adding classrooms to village schools in the Tsavo area, with the rhino costume playing a valuable role in community conservation education.

In allocating funds, time spent in Africa has proved invaluable and David and Johnny have been able to work closely with field operators in Zaire, Namibia, and throughout East Africa.

Namibian desert rhino are now the focus of an exciting new project. The Namibian Black Rhino Fund is a blueprint capital fund as the first of five £1 million umbrella funds for the world's rhino species. Annual return from the funds will provide secure long-term funding for field operators.

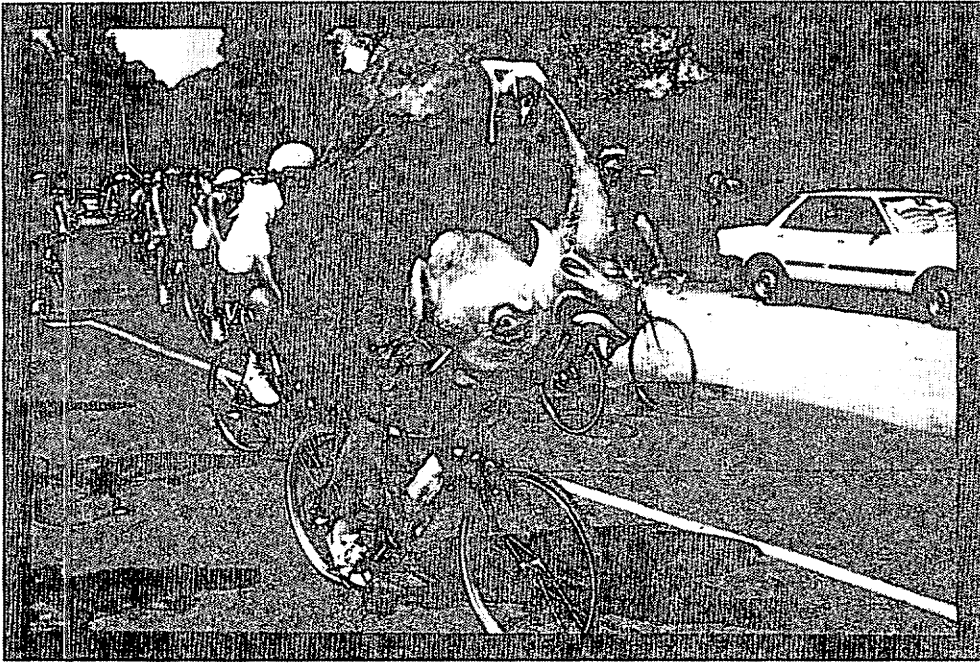
The expansion of Save The Rhino has led to the opening of an office in Cape Town, run by Ben Harbour and Shani Glover, where the response to the running rhino has again been overwhelming. Entries to the Comrades, the Argus Pick 'n Pay Cycle Tour and a dramatic TV finish to the Two Oceans have made the costume a familiar figure to the South African public.

*Fundraising can be exciting and young audiences have shown how committed they are to conservation.*

SRI has linked up with REF in South Africa and is planning to keep the issue of rhino conservation firmly in the public eye. Money raised in South Africa will be spent under the auspices of REF on southern African projects and will be earmarked for local community conservation.

The appeal of the rhino costume is entertainment. Fundraising can be exciting and young audiences have shown how committed they are to conservation.

Save the Rhino is a small charity in international terms, but it plays a valuable role in keeping rhino conservation in the public eye. The rhino costume has enjoyed a wonderful new career and will continue to captivate audiences with its endeavours.



An SRI volunteer at the Argus Pick 'n Pay Cycle Tour

The rhino befriends young children at a Soweto school



The rhino has become a popular figure at the Comrades