

REALLY, RHINOS!

VOL. 3 #3 FALL 1989

Joan Diggs of African Wildlife Foundation (1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036) sent me the following article:

Seven Americans have pleaded guilty and have been sentenced to violations of federal law as a result of smuggling rhino horn into the U.S. John C. Lukman, Jr., and six others were arrested late in 1988 at the culmination of an eight month investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Lukman received a jail sentence of 27 months, a \$20,000 fine, and three years of supervised release after he leaves jail. The other perpetrators received lesser sentences and one Russell Beveridge, Jr. had his automobile (used to transport the rhino horn) taken away. Three South African nationals were also indicted and efforts to extradite them to the U.S. are under way. Ironically, if convicted the foreigners could receive jail terms between 10-50 years!

CONSERVATION HOTLINE

"In a last-ditch effort to save their few remaining black rhinos, Namibian wildlife officials have removed the horns of an undisclosed number of animals in Damaraland, a desert region where the population had been increasing in recent years. The Directorate of Nature Conservation acted after five rhinos were killed there for their horns earlier this year. 'The dehorning of the black rhinoceros is a drastic step,' Brian Jones, an official of the directorate, declared. 'But there seems to be a new wave of poaching, and we decided, because of the desperate situation, that this action had to be taken.' The goal is to destroy the animals' value to poachers. Namibia is gaining independence, after 70 years of South African rule, and conservationists

fear that thousands of unemployed soldiers may resort to poaching to make a living. To dehorn the rhinos, each animal was anesthetized for about 25 minutes while its two horns were sawed off and the bases filed down; the horn, like human fingernails, is made of keratin and removing it causes no pain. Scientists will be watching the rhinos to see if their lack of horns diminishes their ability to feed, breed, or protect themselves and their young from predators."



[ed. note: if you receive Animal Kingdom, watch for the next issue. Really, Rhinos! will have an add in it thanks in part to the generosity of Rhino Gary Berquist of Connecticut. Thanks Gary! Reprinted from *Animal Kingdom*, Sept/Oct, 1989]

Assam Thanks to Dr. Esmond Martin for sharing his article from *Oryx Magazine*, 23(3):124-125 July, 1989:

Wildlife personnel in Assam must be congratulated on their efforts to curb rhino poaching. Out of Assam's rhino population of about 1300, an average of 57 were killed annually from about 1982 to 1986. In 1987, however, only 41 rhinos were poached. In Kaziranga National Park where about 1100 Indian rhinos live (over 80% of the world's total population), only 24 were poached in 1987 as opposed to 41 the previous year. This encouraging decline in poaching is due partly to efforts of dedicated managerial staff over the past few years. It is also due to a scheme set up by the Central Government of India in April, 1986 to assist Assam in allocating 50 million rupees for rhino conservation over a period of several years. This money is being used for arms, road, bridges, vehicles, wildlife equipment and construction of anti-poaching camps, as well as recurrent expenditures.

The future of Assam's rhinos looked promising until the 1988 monsoon, which flooded 70-80% of the park caused the death of at least 38 rhinos, including 23 calves. To avoid future catastrophes, it has been proposed that the road that runs through the center of Kaziranga be widened and raised. Also planned is an all-out effort to acquire some high land and strengthen the rescue and relief operations in order to help distressed animals.

It is not easy to assess the damage done during the 1988 floods but there is no question that they have presented a clear and present danger to the Indian rhino species. [P.S. I have a video about Kaziranga which I would be happy to copy for anyone providing a blank VHS video and about 70¢ return postage]

