



Rhino Watch

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AFRICAN RHINO OWNERS ASSOCIATION
A SPECIALIST WORKING GROUP OF THE RHINO & ELEPHANT FOUNDATION

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Wildlife Breeding Resource Centre Rhino Programme

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The Wildlife Breeding Resource Centre is the only full-time centre in Africa researching the techniques of assisted reproduction (artificial insemination, embryo transfer) for application to our endangered African Wildlife species. It is also the only centre which uses an extensive network of participating wildlife owners and breeders to collect genetic material from deceased animals to create a bank of frozen sperm and embryos for future use.

The rhino is a priority species at the WBRC, and the WBRC has, over the past

two years, been collecting the testes from hunted white rhino, to research the techniques needed for successfully freezing rhino sperm, as well as to create a stock of good quality rhino sperm from trophy animals for infusion back to the remaining population. This can be used to avert inbreeding and trophy quality decline in areas where the rhino population is dispersed over great distances.

As a result of this programme, and due to the enthusiastic cooperation of the hunting fraternity, the WBRC has been successful in freezing white rhino sperm

and is the only centre in the world with stocks of viable white rhino sperm banked. If you lose your rhino (female or male) or know of any rhino hunts that will take place at any time, please contact the WBRC on (012) 316-5840 or Paul 082 990 3533, or Yolana 082 990 3534 so that we may collect the testes or ovaries from your animal and expand on the work that we have already done in developing assisted reproduction as a tool for continued rhino conservation.

Book review

Rhino ranching - A manual for owners of white rhinos by Dr JG Du Toit (South African Veterinary Foundation).

Dr. du Toit is a founder member of AROA, as well as a member of the SAVA Wildlife Group. He is a rhino owner himself, and has been experimenting with dehorning of white rhinos for a number of years. Through this work much knowledge has been gained on the effects of dehorning the social, ecological and breeding status of the animals in question. It was therefore gratefully accepted by AROA when Dr. du Toit offered to author the first manual for rhino owners.

In a joint venture by the African Rhino Owners Association and the South African Veterinary Foundation, the manual was launched earlier this year. The aim of the book is to provide the reader with insights and practical advice on all matters relat-

ing to rhino ownership and management, in a simple, easy to understand manner.

Each chapter starts with a short description of the topic to be covered, e.g. habitat requirements, reproduction, management and capture, and then proceeds to list the practical implications of various aspects of the topic under discussion. Guidelines, gained from the author's own, as well as various other experts' and owners' experiences, are then listed in a concise summary of how to minimize stress, injuries and mortalities of white rhinos. The politics and financial implications of rhino conservation and ranching are also discussed.

The chapter on capture, transport, boma management and release, is essential reading for especially first-time rhino buyers, but even established owners, veterinarians and game dealers may find information they were previously not

aware of.

Another useful inclusion is an appendix listing the major role players in rhino conservation and ranching circles. These include state departments, game veterinarians, captures and auctioneers, stud breeders and a host of other related institutions and individuals.

The manual was written as a practical guide, and as much information on white rhinos is given in as little space as possible, to save the reader the trouble of looking for the relevant information which is often obscured in the more academically orientated works.

The manual is available through AROA at R75,00(including postage). For further information, or to place an order, please contact the AROA office at (011) 453 9829.

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Provisional statistics of rhino populations as provided by Richard Emslie of IUCN's African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG)

Total estimate for white rhinos for Africa in the wild (rounded to nearest 10) 8 470
Total estimate for black rhinos for Africa in the wild 2 640
11 110

Sub Species

Northern white rhino	25
Southern white rhino	8 441
South Western black rhino (<i>Bicornis</i>)	741
West African (<i>Longipes</i>)	10
East African (<i>Michaeli</i>)	485

Southern central (*minor*) 1 408
In terms of Africa, private ownership of white rhino now stands at approximately 2 100.
In terms of black rhino numbers, the situation declined up to 1992, then stabilized from 1992-1996 at around 2 400, and numbers have now increased to 2 640.
Southern white rhino numbers have continued to increase, however, despite the successes two of the six African rhino sub-species remain extremely vulnerable.

Rhino Museum - First in Africa



The Rhino Museum will be located within the old Melkrivier School in the Waterberg Mountains of the Northern Province of South Africa. This historical landmark was first built in 1935 and was a farm boarding school for primary school children. The school site has been abandoned since 1962. The museum will be situated four kilometers off the main tarred road between Vaalwater and the town of Marken and en-route to Lapalala Wilderness. The Waterberg has the potential and is rapidly developing in to one of South Africa's most important conservation areas and has the fourth highest concentration of rhino in South Africa.

Since the turn of the century, the black rhino has been virtually exterminated from the Cape to the Sudan. That this creature has survived to near the end of the 20th century is a miracle in itself. The species that has roamed the planet for more than 30 million years has been brought to the brink of extinction in less than 30 years. Perhaps 100 000 roamed the African landscape in the '60s, but war, corruption, greed and the indifference of man have led to its near demise.

The white rhino, by contrast, was all but exterminated in southern Africa around the turn of the century and today largely due to the efforts of the Natal Parks Board and its fieldstaff - men such as Ian Player, Nick Steele and fellow game rangers - has recovered and is thriving. A vicious war to save the rhino has been raging from Kenya to South Africa and a great deal of blood has spilt from both rhinos and humans alike.

There are but four major populations of rhino surviving in Africa today: Kenya, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa - (which presently has the highest population of both species). The rhino wars

were costly and today protecting the species is just as expensive, if not more so. Rhino are now kept only in tightly-controlled national parks and reserves (intensive protection zones) and private sanctuaries, which are making a major contribution to the species' survival. Fortunately, the swing is no longer down and we have seen a leveling off and a slow recovery. We need to be very cautious and no one can afford to drop their guard. Rhino horn will remain in high demand and we need to maintain the utmost vigilance and support for all of the five surviving species of rhino: the two African and the three Asian species.

Why a Rhino Museum ?

This will be the first museum of its kind anywhere in Africa, devoted entirely to the conservation of rhinoceros. When Zulu, Tswana and Sotho field rangers looking after rhinos in bomas were asked why they cared so much about this animal, their reply was " because they are a gift from God". No other species in Africa has faced such a horrendous decline, has been so misunderstood and so neglected. If we lose the rhino, we will lose something of ourselves. The rhino represents the flagship of African conservation and if we can prove we can save that flagship, we should be able to care for everything else.

The objective is quite simple - we need to make as many people as possible aware of what has befallen the species, what we are trying to do about it is important to ensure that they do not become extinct.

Who will visit the museum?

The museum will be en route to the Lapalala Wilderness School, where approximately 2 500 children and teachers attend courses annually.

The Abraham Kriel Children's Home is directly opposite the museum and their teachers will be encouraged to include the museum in every child's visit. Visitors to Lapalala Wilderness and the rapidly growing wildlife-orientated industry in the Waterberg Mountains and its environs: self catering establishments, lodges, tented camps, horse riding safaris, hiking trails, country retreats.

The general public.

Local schools and communities in the region.

Research graduates and students.

Who will control the museum?

The Rhino Museum will fall under the auspices of the Rhino & Elephant

Foundation, Fundraising Number 01100625 000 1), and will be administered by a management board, which will include Trustees of the Rhino & Elephant Foundation and the Wilderness Trust, who will operate the Cultural and Natural History Museum. Both museums will form part of an overall environmental education centre, which will include an auditorium, library, archives, art gallery and meeting rooms. Ample parking will be available and the museum will be open seven days a week.

How can you help?

The infrastructure is in place and only requires restoration and renovation. The exhibition centre will be located in one of the large original school dormitories.

Adjacent to the Rhino Museum will be a Cultural and Natural History Centre, devoted to the peoples and wildlife of the Waterberg Mountains. A refreshment area and shop will also be established and the principal's original homestead will house the curator.

You can help by making a donation, no matter how large or small, towards this exciting project. Every supporter's name will be inscribed on a special plaque, to be unveiled at the opening ceremony.

For further information contact Rhino Museum

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