



## Many cooks make a great country-style stew

We were very proud when Cathy Dean presented our 'Rafiki wa Faru' environmental education programme at the African Rhino Specialist Group 2011 meeting as an example of a successful and sustainable programme for informing and educating school children about black rhino conservation.

Tony Fitzjohn | Director, George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust

**R**afiki wa Faru was developed with GAWPT, Save the Rhino, Chester Zoo and Tusk Trust, to get messages across about water, habitat restoration, and black rhino and wild dog conservation and let the guys who work here talk to the kids about what they do and stimulate discussion. We found that using the staff who actually work in the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary gave an authentic and personal touch.



In the last 12 months Chester Zoo has paid for uniforms and radio comms, for a water bowser, guard outposts and part-funded 'Rafiki wa Faru'

The schoolchildren really like the mixture of the bush experience, a little bit of classroom and learning, and some fun activities. In the midst of it all, the rhino trackers pitch up at the education centre to tell the pupils about their work, especially

what they have been doing since early that morning. In a group of 28 pupils, we love to see a few of them look back over their shoulders at the trackers as they leave, with a look in their face that says 'I want to be like them one day'.

Another great addition is that the TANAPA (Tanzanian National Parks Authority) education officer (a lady)

greeted the children as they come into the Park, introducing the schoolgirls to the lady rangers who are wearing full uniform. Suddenly a whole new world opens up for these girls, who never thought they could do a job like that. This gives us a good feeling for the future.

With support and advice from Chester Zoo (especially Maggie Esson), we are in no doubt that this input of professionalism mixed with our country-style stew has been a great combination. We would welcome any visits

from other groups with either fledgling or well-established environmental education programmes.

Chester Zoo also stepped in to help with other things. Our 40-year-old Bedford water tanker broke its chassis, forcing the tanker off the road into a large ditch where the front wheel came off, the windscreen cracked and the radiator punctured. It was time for a replacement. But time we did not have. Rhinos have to be supplied with water every day. We were in the middle of the dry season and water had to be collected from the TANAPA HQ on a daily 90km round trip. We urgently needed a locally made, well-engineered 7,000-litre water bowser that could be hitched to our Massey Ferguson tractor. Chester said yes immediately; we heaved a huge sigh of relief.

To beef up security at Mkomazi, Chester Zoo also gave two new security outposts and replaced the mobile units' and fence gangs' old radios. The communications are now better than they have ever been. The radio repeater in the centre of the Sanctuary has been replaced, as ants had got into the radios and messed them up. Finally, everyone now has two new sets of full uniforms and boots, with spares in the base camp should they be needed.

TANAPA has formed a new patrol base in the old ranger lines below Kisima base camp. They have their own duties to carry out but are always on call should we need them. We are enormously grateful for this kind of understanding and cooperation from this dedicated organisation.

It is kind of stating the obvious, but we could never have done this on our own. The combination of us as a field organisation, SRI as loyal and determined backer, Chester Zoo with its generosity and expertise and USFWS with funding, is one that works really

well. I am especially grateful that there isn't an enormous amount of repetitive paperwork involved, which would only force me to an early sell-by-date!

### Thanks

In addition to the above, SRI would also like to thank Mark and David Worsfold, Charles Brewer, Guy Manners and Rick Anstis, who climbed Kili in February 2011 to raise funds for Save the Rhino and Mkomazi. And published a great book called *Mole Valley to Kili*.

ALL IMAGES MKOMAZI RHINO SANCTUARY

