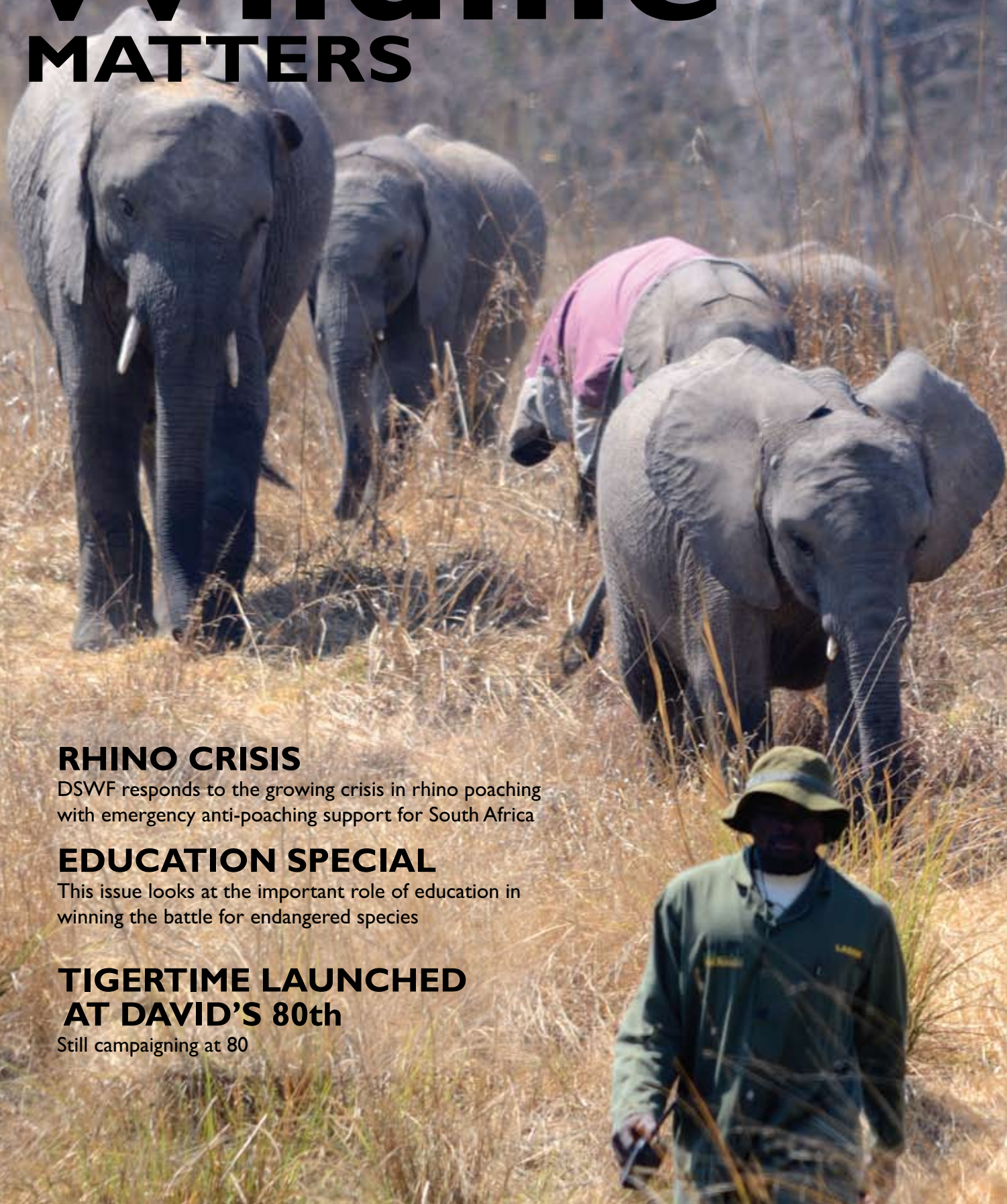


Wildlife MATTERS



RHINO CRISIS

DSWF responds to the growing crisis in rhino poaching with emergency anti-poaching support for South Africa

EDUCATION SPECIAL

This issue looks at the important role of education in winning the battle for endangered species

TIGERTIME LAUNCHED AT DAVID'S 80th

Still campaigning at 80

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“All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing”
Edmund Burke

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Learning to rhino spot...

Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) join forces in a highly successful air-to-ground exercise.

By Bernd Brell, Simson Uri-Khob and Sue Wagner

DSWF is working in Namibia to save one of the world's last surviving, truly wild populations of black rhinos living in the planet's oldest desert. And, with a massive increase in poaching in neighbouring African countries ensuring their protection has never been more critical.

In July another round of the on-going 'Enhancing rhino security' capacity building programme for Community Game Guards and Ministry of Environment and Tourism staff took place. Simson, SRT's Director of Community Outreach, Training and Research organised the training on the ground while Bernd Brell, SRT's pilot and Director of Field Operations, guided the trainee spotters in the air.

With the exception of Naftali, none of the four spotters had ever been in an aeroplane, let alone tried to spot rhino from one. Piloted by Bernd, Naftali acted as navigator and assisted with the spotting as well as the training of the new members.

Before each flight safety and angles of vision at which spotting should be done from an aircraft were discussed and, with none of the participants becoming airsick, there was great team spirit.

The two ground teams, comprising SRT and MET staff led by Simson Uri-Khob, camped at Draaihoek before setting out on foot. In most cases the trackers were already on the spoor when they received the co-ordinates from the spotters in the air. They then moved in to where the rhino was and completed identification forms.

They were also taught how to identify an aeroplane from the ground, information critical in identifying foreign planes in the area and vital anti-poaching information. In addition, the ground teams honed their binocular and digital camera skills and special emphasis was placed on recording the condition of the animals as this cannot be determined from the air.

A total of nine rhinos were spotted during the three day period along with two elephants, close to 160 zebra, 13 giraffe and a couple of new springs found (possibly due to the above average rainy season).

It was a highly successful joint training and team-building exercise. It was also a very beneficial patrolling and monitoring effort - one that will definitely be repeated in the future as the urgent need to monitor and protect these critically important rhino populations increases.



Field Director, Bernd Brell explains rhino tracking equipment and id forms



A trainee marks ear notches on id form



On patrol on day three of training



Expert trackers learn about the benefits of a spotting scope; Observation tower sponsored by DSWF; Dundi with Kiteng, her 2nd calf



Security and Protection Plan takes on the poachers

By Lucky Mavrandonis and Sue Downie

Rhino poaching in South Africa has, in the last couple of years, become savage and barbaric. The syndicates, now being referred to as the "khaki collar mafia", because they are so-called wildlife industry professionals – ranging from vets to game farm owners to helicopter pilots and hunters – are driven by unadulterated greed and have a depraved indifference to the animal's suffering. Rhinos are paralysed and their horns and faces hacked or chain-sawed to remove the horns. The animal is left to die a horrible, excruciatingly painful death. Why? Because many people in the East have a totally unsubstantiated belief that the keratin in rhino horn (the same ingredient in your finger nails and hair) has mythological powers.

The crime is so appalling that one is left feeling totally helpless in the face of such horror: Rhino poaching is a national crisis in South Africa. It is a massive problem that has to be fought on many fronts, from teaching young Asians about how rhino horn is obtained, to direct action to protect rhinos in the veld.

With the help and support of DSWF, we decided that we could do the latter and we are now working to protect the populations of black rhino that we care for. The populations

we monitor live in very different habitats, with different topography and in parks that vary in size from 20,000ha to 90,000ha. We discussed our protection ideas widely and plans were submitted, discussed and budgets approved. DSWF were amazing in their response to the crisis and in a short time a massive injection of funds set all the plans in motion.

“We have action plans and political will. We need more resources and serious financial support.”

Over 302 rhinos have been killed in South Africa since January this year, an increase over last year's unimaginably horrific figures. The good news is that in June, since the deployment of the South African National Defence Force, there has been a dramatic decrease in rhino poaching in Kruger National Park. The bad news is that the killers have moved to other areas. This is exactly what we predicted might happen and why we embarked on the pro-active initiative. DSWF funds have been used to increase visible

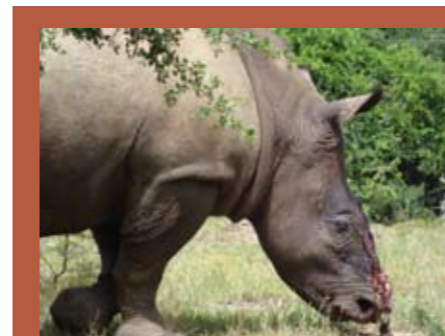
anti-poaching patrols; increase the number of field rangers; erect observation posts and towers; equip field rangers; train and upgrade skills in anti-poaching; train people to fly surveillance aircraft for regular aerial patrols and to pay salaries and overtime for the extra security.

An additional bonus is that funds from DSWF have had a huge motivational impact on all the rangers. Being properly prepared, equipped and trained is a big advantage in fighting off the poaching gangs.

Extinction is forever. We cannot afford to lose this war against the poachers. Rhinos have adapted over millennia to survive on this fragile planet but they have no defence against greedy poachers. What they do have is people like you with your generosity in giving much needed funds to save this ancient, strange looking animal in a faraway continent. There is a saying "all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing". Please do not let evil, greedy, self-serving people push the rhino into extinction. Help us protect our rhinos. We have action plans and political will – now we need more resources and serious financial support.

Geza - A Life Cut Short

There are many newspaper and media reports stacked with statistics about the violent surge in rhino poaching but very few accounts that take us to the heart of the matter. In his amazing story, wildlife vet Dr William Fowlds, brings us face to face with the emotional turmoil of making a life and death decision for a rhino attacked by poachers. This is a must read MUST share story. Find it at www.davidshepherd.org



Editors Note: In each edition of Wildlife Matters we endeavour to bring you the most up-to-date news on all our projects and the species that we work to protect. Unfortunately, the recent images of rhino poaching that have come into the office are simply too awful to share with you here. For the stout-hearted you can find an album of images on our David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation Facebook page. They illustrate the cruellest aspect of human life.

Photos courtesy of Lucky Mavrandonis, Sue Downie, Mike Hornes and William Fowlds

Photos courtesy of SRT Namibia