

NOTES

A note about the cover photograph

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The photograph shows an immobilized black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis minor*) being airlifted out of a remote part of a nature reserve in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The animal is being translocated as part of a national conservation initiative, which aims to stimulate the growth of the national black rhino population by harvesting animals from those populations that are at, or approaching, ecological carrying capacity and translocating them to new state or privately held areas where the founder population has the potential to grow to at least 50 animals. The animal pictured on the cover is one of a group of 20 rhinos (one bull died en route) that were translocated to a reserve in the north of the country after WWF's Black Rhino Range Expansion Project brokered a custodianship agreement between the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency and private land owners. The agreement stipulates that the translocated rhinos remain the property of the Agency and that their progeny are shared equally between the two parties. In this way the national black rhino management plan's objective to increase the growth rate of the national herd can be achieved; both parties benefit

from the arrangement. This is the seventh site that the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project has helped to establish in this manner over the past nine years.

Due to the difficult terrain and inaccessibility of large parts of the donor reserve, a relatively new technique of airlifting rhinos was employed with the aid of an ankle harness and a Super-Huey helicopter. This technique was first developed by Dr Peter Morkel and has now become the method of choice for rhino recovery in difficult terrain. Prior to this, animals were recovered by vehicle or by manhandling them into a net and then airlifting the rhinos to accessible areas. Neither of these two methods is ideal as vehicle recovery usually involves a rough and fairly traumatic trip in a crate and nets are difficult to load animals into and can restrict breathing during transport. The ankle harness, on the other hand, can be fitted quickly and with minimal manipulation of the animal. The rhino is then gently airlifted to where a recovery team revives and loads the animal into a crate for transport to its final destination. The animals do not experience any ill effects from this method, likely because capture, transport and sedation time are significantly reduced.