

WWF HIGHLIGHTS FOR 1997

[Focus, 20(1):4, Jan/Feb, 1998]

The endangered black rhinos of Kenya, once indiscriminately slaughtered for their horns, are on the comeback. Government-run and private rhino sanctuaries have proved so successful that Nairobi National Park actually exceeded its rhino carrying capacity last year. WWF has helped support the relocation of 14 rhinos to Tsavo East National Park. WWF has also purchased vehicles and equipment for park staff, funded research, and supported private rhino sanctuaries. And in neighboring Tanzania, WWF has hired a rhino expert to help the government develop a countrywide conservation program. Finally, WWF is supporting rhino conservation activities in Asia (\$27,000). Check out their web page: www.worldwildlife.org

RHINOS KILLED.... AND NOT BY POACHERS!!

[Time, October 13, 1997, p.68]



You may have seen this article last fall. White rhinos in Pilanesberg National Park in northwestern South Africa were being killed at the rate of once a month. In Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park in the southeastern part of the country were also experiencing rhino losses. Was it poachers? Not this time. It was rogue elephants - aggressive, young bull elephants that did in the rhinos by knocking them over, kneeling on them and goring them. Game wardens posit the bulls were depraved because they were deprived (Gee, Officer Krupke!). Becoming orphans after the murder of their parents, these young ganstas were no longer part of a tight-knit social group.

With no exposure to adult elephants or the hierarchical social structure, the long-term effect of this isolation appears to be a generation of juvenile delinquents. This is compounded especially during the "musth" period when testosterone levels go through the roof. Without adult chaperons, the bulls are going into musth sooner and the episode is lasting longer. Elephants aren't immune to stress and when they pick on an unsuspecting rhino, it's more a crime of convenience. The rhino is just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Two years ago, Kruger Park stopped elephant-culling program and began to move entire families of elephants to their new homes. It will be some time before the effects of these efforts are known. Until then, the white rhinos

of South Africa had better watch their backs. [ed note: Amazing how the human world so closely mirrors that of the animal world!]

GOOD NEWS FOR RHINOS!

[Esmond Martin and Lucy Vigne, SWARA, 20(5):13-25, September/October, 1997]

After decades of decline, black rhino numbers are slowly recovering. Private sanctuaries have proved an effective way of protecting Africa's remaining rhinos. Four main factors have contributed to a continent-wide decline in rhino poaching:

- Increased government protection of remnant populations generally in fenced-off reserves.
- Government encouragement of private wildlife sanctuaries.
- Improved local law enforcement.
- A drop in international demand for rhinoceros horn.

Now that black rhinos are being protected effectively, and if the above strategies are sustained, the numbers should continue to rise.

Nowhere in the world is new rhino horn so blatantly open for the public to see as in Yemen's capital Sanaa. This illegal trade in Africa's rhino horn continues and is a great threat to both black and white rhinos. Since 1993, Yemen has imported probably more rhino horn than any other country. The price for rhino horn reaching Yemen has remained stable since 1985 at around US\$1,000 a kilo, even though the supply has been gradually falling. This indicates a decline in demand for rhino horn.

Since 1990 the economy of Yemen has been dropping and the living standard of the average Yemeni has fallen. Fewer men can afford to buy *jambiyas* (traditional Yemeni dagger) with rhino horn handles today. Richer men choose the older, more valuable ones which sell for about US\$1,400 each; they do not want *jambiyas* with newly-made rhino horn handles - which sells for about US\$285 - as these are considered inferior.

As the middle class shrinks, the demand for *jambiyas* with new rhino horn handles is falling. *Jambiyas* of water buffalo horn, plastic, camel nail wood are more affordable, priced from about US\$10 to as little as US\$4. However, after several years of international pressures on Yemen to join CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna), the president