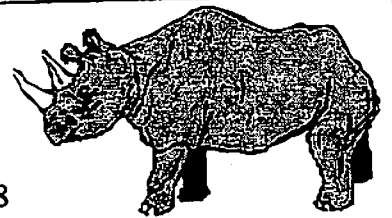


REALLY, RHINOS!



Volume 12/4, 1998

Endangered Rhinos Survive War

[WWF Focus, 20(5):3, September/October, 1998]

In spite of military outbursts and widespread fears for its survival, the world's most threatened subspecies of rhinoceros, the northern white rhino, survived last year's civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire).

A survey of rhinos and their habitat carried out by WWF in Garamba National Park has shown at least 24 animals to have survived or been born since fighting broke out in 1996, when WWF conservationists had to be evacuated from the area. Garamba, located in the northeast region of the country, is the only known place on Earth where the northern white rhino still exists in the wild.

"We were afraid of what we would find," said Kate Newman, director of WWF's East and Southern Africa programs. "Given the instability in the area and lack of adequate security, it has been impossible to ascertain the situation until just recently." Among the 24 rhinos observed in aerial surveys done in Garamba in May, there were at least three young rhinos born within the last year.

WWF began its involvement in the conservation of Garamba's white rhinos in 1984 when the estimated total population of rhinos in the area was thought to be as low as 13 individuals. "That there are at least 24 rhinos surviving in the region is for us a great source of encouragement and a testament to the dedicated work over the years of scientists and conservationists working on the ground," said Newman.

To learn more about this volatile area, visit the WWF website: www.world-wildlife.org

Sand Rivers: Selous Game Reserve

[SWARA, 20:6 & 21:1, pp.8-11]

In the heart of Southern Tanzania lies one of the largest areas of protected wilderness in the world. Created by the German government between 1905 and 1912 and known today as the Selous Games Reserve, it is named after the famous adventurer and hunter who died and was buried there in 1917. In the 1980s the vast Selous, an area of 43,626 square kilometers, witnessed possibly the worst slaughter of wildlife, particularly of elephants and rhinos, in Africa. Two events halted this massacre: a fall in the price of ivory and a huge and successful crack-down on poaching. Now, elephant numbers are rising and tourism is on the increase - with it, a greater public interest in conservation.

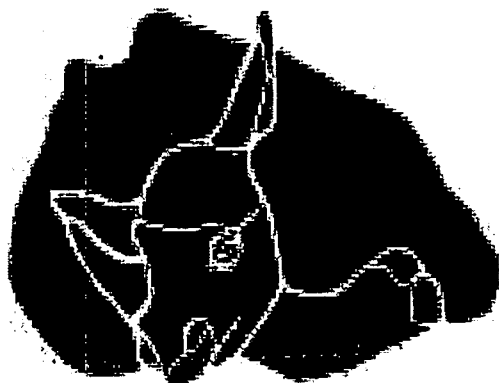
Rhinos, however, remain on the brink of extinction. The directors of a new lodge named Sand Rivers have initiated, along with the government, a rhino project to protect the black rhinos in their area, and a World Wide Fund for Nature technical adviser is currently surveying the whole of the Selous for rhinos. Hopefully, with this kind of support, the Selous rhinos, once one of the biggest populations in the world, will yet survive.

In 1981 there were about 2,000 black rhinos in the Selous Game Reserve, the largest population of any place in Africa. By the late 1980s, this figure dropped to less than 500. In 1989, Tanzania launched Operation Uhai - an anti-poaching campaign involving, for the first time ever, huge government resources to overcome the massive illegal hunting of rhinos. It was also the first time that Tanzania's armed forces were deployed in any part of the country to solve this immense problem. One



thousand soldiers surrounded Selous, an area well known for decades for rhino horn smuggling, while a thousand police and two hundred personnel from the Department of Wildlife and from Tanzania's National Parks swept the rest of the country. Between June 1989 and February 1991, 2,607 poachers and traders were arrested and prosecuted.

Since 1990 very few rhino carcasses have been found in the Selous. Although this appears encouraging, it may partly be because the carcass dismembers quickly, and unlike elephant bones which are white in color, rhino bones are grey and not easily spotted from an airplane. Benson Kibonde, project manager of the Selous Game Reserve, has 120 game scouts. He is now rehabilitating vehicles and graders and has increased the number of casual laborers. He wishes to map the Selous to decide where to concentrate his forces and wants to increase mobility on the ground, on the rivers and lakes and in the air as well as to improve overall communications. Kibonde says that the Selous' rhinos are so few and so scattered that unless he protects the whole of the reserve they will not survive. His long-term plan is to improve anti-poaching on the Selous boundary and hope rhino numbers will then rise.



What makes the Selous unique is that it is the largest game reserve in Africa. With its large quantities of big game the Selous offers a glimpse of life in Africa a hundred years ago - walking in silence, with every sense alert, and just a rifle for protection. It is a humbling experience and a huge privilege to be able to follow on foot the fresh tracks of hippos along a sand river, surprise a dozing buffalo in a pool, then hear the rumblings of an elephant, momentarily hidden by a tree on the bank, only several steps away. In our overcrowded world, few people will ever have such a chance to feel the power and exhilaration of Africa's largest wilderness.

Sand Rivers is unique in one more way, and perhaps the most important of all. It is the only lodge or permanent tented camp in the Selous putting significant amounts of money directly into rhino conservation. In November, 1995, the founders of Sand Rivers, Richard Bonham and Bimb and Lizzy Theobald, along with Tanzania's director of wildlife and the project manager of the Selous Game Reserve set up the Sand Rivers Rhino Project.

This enterprise is the first of its kind aimed at protecting one specific rhino population. These rhinos - at least six hundred in number and ranging over perhaps a hundred square kilometers - occur in the Kidai area which is west of Sand Rivers and just north of the Rufiji River. They have survived due to their remoteness and inaccessibility. However, when Richard Bonham found a poachers' camp in the area in 1994, he and the Department of Wildlife decided anti-poaching patrols were needed to save the rhinos. Sand Rivers raised funds for the Rhino Project and refurbished the abandoned rangers' post of Kidai. The Director of the Department of Wildlife, Bakari Mbanjo, allocated six game scouts in January 1996 and the Rhino Project doubled their salaries and paid them night allowances as incentives, and this continues today. The client to Sand Rivers paid for a leader's salary for a year, and this scout joined the others in March 1996 at Kidai Camp. Good leadership gives motivation which is vital to the success of patrol work.

As of July, 1997, Lizzy Theobald had raised nearly \$50,000 for the protection of these rhinos, not only for augmenting salaries for anti-poaching staff, but also for uniforms, and equipment, including VHF radios, GPS, rechargeable batteries, infrared cameras and night-vision binoculars. Sand Rivers also helped Kidai Camp with transport and fuel. The scouts' presence is an essential deterrent, not only to would-be rhino poachers, but also to fish and meat poachers who come up the old river course from Mloka village on the eastern Selous boundary, a day's walk away from this rich fishing area. No rhino has been poached recently in the area, and in 1997, a new calf was born, a fine tribute to the success of the Rhino Project.

Sand Rivers is an excellent example of how a private tourist lodge is working with the government to support conservation. For tourists staying there, it is good to know that the lodge is effective.

SSP Rhino Baby Boom!

(source: www.rhinos-irf.org)

Sex	Birth Date	Location
-----	------------	----------

SOUTHERN BLACK RHINO

M	15 Nov 95*	McAllen's Santillana Ranch
F	29 Dec 95	Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
F	1 Jan 96	Milwaukee County Zoological Gardens
M	7 Mar 96	White Oak Conservation Center
M	6 May 96	El Coyote Ranch
F	24 Aug 96	El Coyote Ranch
M	8 Jan 97	El Coyote Ranch
M	23 Jan 97	White Oak Conservation Center
F	2 Feb 97	Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
M	4 Feb 97	Dallas Zoo
M	8 Feb 97	White Oak Conservation Center

EASTERN BLACK RHINO

M	22 Aug 95	Riverbanks Zoological Park
M	10 Mar 95	Brookfield Zoo
M	22 Jul 95	San Diego Wild Animal Park
F	13 Aug 95	San Francisco Zoological Gardens
M	18 Dec 95*	Caldwell Zoo
M	6 Oct 96	San Diego Wild Animal Park
M	9 Jan 97	San Francisco Zoological Gardens
F	13 May 96	Miami Metrozoo

SOUTHERN WHITE RHINO

F	26 Fe 95	San Diego Wild Animal Park
F	9 Jul 95	White Oak Conservation Center
M	11 Nov 95	Knoxville Zoological Gardens
M	26 Nov 95	Knoxville Zoological Gardens
F	30 Jan 97	San Diego Wild Animal Park
M	13 Feb 97	White Oak Conservation Center

INDIAN RHINO

M	26 May 95	San Diego Wild Animal Park
M	24 Aug 95*	San Diego Wild Animal Park
F	28 Dec 95	Bronx Zoo/Wildlife Conservation Park
M	4 Jan 96	San Diego Wild Animal Park
F	18 Sept 96	National Zoological Park
M	30 Oct 96	National Zoological Park
F	6 Dec 96	Oklahoma City Zoological Park

* Did not survive

1998 Rhino Census

(rhino stats by Tom Foose, IRF, 7/98)

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	WILD POPULATION	CAPTIVE POPULATION
Southwestern Black Rhino	741	0
Northwestern Black Rhino	-10	0
Eastern Black Rhino	485	180
Southern Black Rhino	1.363	60
TOTAL BLACK RHINO	-2600	240
Northern White Rhino	25	9
Southern White Rhino	-8440	-650
TOTAL WHITE RHINO	-8465	-660
AFRICAN RHINO SPECIES	-11065	-900
Indian/Nepalese Rhino	-2050	130
Indonesian Javan Rhino	50-60	0
Vietnamese Javan Rhino	5-7	0
TOTAL JAVAN RHINO	<70	0
Eastern (Borneo) Sumatran Rhino	50-70	3
Western (Sumatran/Malaya)	-300	14
TOTAL SUMATRAN RHINO	<400	17
ASIAN RHINO SPECIES	-2500	-150
ALL SPECIES	-13565	-1050

tively putting money back into protecting the Selous' rhinos, rather than solely aiming to make a profit.

[ed note: On August 27, 1997, Elizabeth Theobald, co-director of Nomad Safaris and Sand Rivers Selous, died suddenly and tragically of malaria just after visiting her rhino project. Lizzy was a co-founder and driving force behind the project, putting almost more energy into that than into running her lodge. Lizzy's wish was to scientifically verify, with WWF's input and



guidance, rhino numbers and distribution in the northern area of the Selous in order to advise game scouts on the important locations. Currently Max Morgan-Davies, WWF's technical adviser and Tanzania rhino coordinator, is working with the rhino project to assess rhino numbers in the Selous. It is important that this co-operation with WWF continues in order to save the Kidai rhinos and that Lizzy's death does not stall the project. Lizzy is buried in the Selous on a bluff overlooking the Rufiji River close to the rhinos and her lodge.]

Assam's field staff struggle to protect rhinos

[International Zoo News. 45(5):303-307, July/August, 1998]

Assam's protected wildlife areas are suffering from the worst financial cuts for over 20 years. For example, the budget for Kaziranga National Park, home to over 1,200 rhinos has dropped from \$831,000 in 1996/7 to \$581,000 in 1997/8. The national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, several of which are home to the endangered rhino and tiger, are in need of much maintenance. Each year after the monsoon flooding, damage occurs to roads, bridges and camps, and with very little money to repair them conditions are becoming desperate. Of the main rhino areas, Kaziranga National Park had to stop the entry of buses, as the bridges were too fragile to carry their weight.

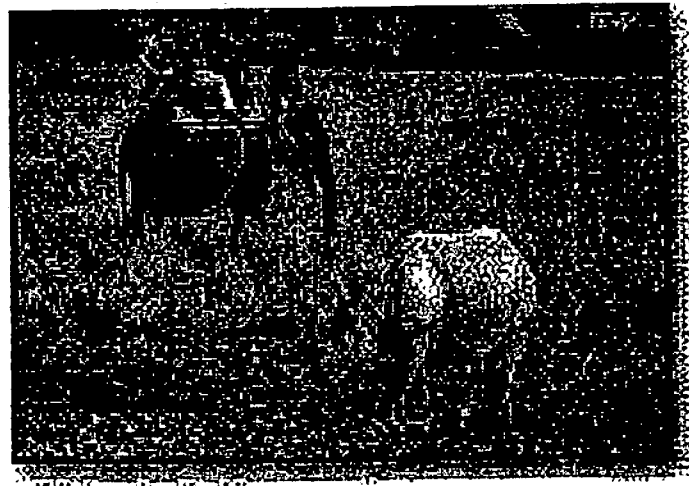
The field staff are suffering too. Salaries are sometimes delayed by months. When a guard is injured, there is no provision in the budget for his hospital bills. The guards need more mosquito nets,

water filters and other basics. Many of the camps need new roofs, as the rain presently pours in. The welfare of the field staff is vital; these men are the backbone of the Forest Department, and the survival of the rhinos and other wildlife depends on them.

Patrol work has been seriously hampered by the budget cuts. Field staff need more guns and rifles, walkie-talkies, flashlights, batteries and battery rechargers. Some are virtually defenseless, and thus the staff are also unable to patrol. This is especially so in Orang, where eight camps out of 23 have no arms; as a result, rhino poaching in Orang has increased - rhino numbers have halved to only 50 in the last four years. In some areas, the camps themselves have been washed out and need to be replaced. In Pabitora (which has 76 rhinos) two destroyed camps on the eastern boundary made possible two poaching incidents in 1997.

It is a miracle that despite these deplorable conditions, most of the field staff remain dedicated. This has been due to the good leadership of several outstanding Ranger Officers. Consequently rhino poaching has been generally contained in 1996 and 1997, but for how much longer can this continue with severe financial shortages for rhino protection and the maintenance and development of parks and sanctuaries?

Donations to the Wildlife Areas Development and Welfare Trust in Assam are welcomed. The Trust's brochure states: "The forest staff is fighting a bare-handed, losing battle with the armed smugglers and poachers, and the enemies of the forests...both the protectors and the protected are heavily suffering as the Department continues to reel under acute financial crisis." Funds can be sent to the Trust at Rehabari, Guwahati, 7810008, Assam, India.

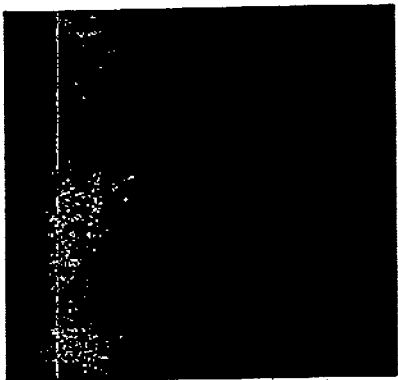


Rhino stocking stuffers (if you wear a size 16EEE)

Rhino Night Light. Made from a special formula of resin bonded with marble. Durable and safe. Warm off-white color blends with any decor throughout the home. To order write: Dixon Designs 1447 Ridge Rd, Vista, CA 92083 (760) 758.0188

3-D rhinoceros formed from thousands of tiny points created with a new laser technology. 3' wide. \$195. Call: 800-538-0766. (L.H. Selman, Ltd.)

Want your very own customized mouse pad?
Contact <http://www4.iprint.com>



Happy Holidays to
rhinophiles everywhere!



Answer to last week's greeting card quiz...

(O.K. You're stuck in a room with your boss, a charging rhinoceros, a raging tiger and a poisonous snake. Your gun has only two bullets. What should you do?)

Put two bullets in your boss, of course! :-)

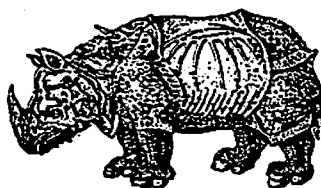
Pen & ink drawings. Limited Editions. Upon special request, watercolor can be added to make each print a one of a kind work of art (no additional charge!) Prints come double matted with choice of six matting colors. Prints can be framed. Prices range from 8x10 prints @ \$15 (matted) to \$70 (framed). Contact Karen Jesella: (716) 352.7046.

A one year quarterly subscription to *Really, Rhinos!* is \$20 (\$25 foreign). Make check payable to Judyth Lessee. 100% of each subscription is donated to rhino conservation projects. Send feedback or rhino citations to: *Really, Rhinos!*, PO Box 40503, Tucson, AZ 85717-0503 Phone: (520) 327-9048.

e-mail: rinophyl@rtd.com. www.rtd.com/~rinophyl

If you find errors, please know they are printed for those who always look for them. We try to print something for everybody.

Really, Rhinos!
PO Box 40503
Tucson, AZ 85717-0503



Please renew your subscription!