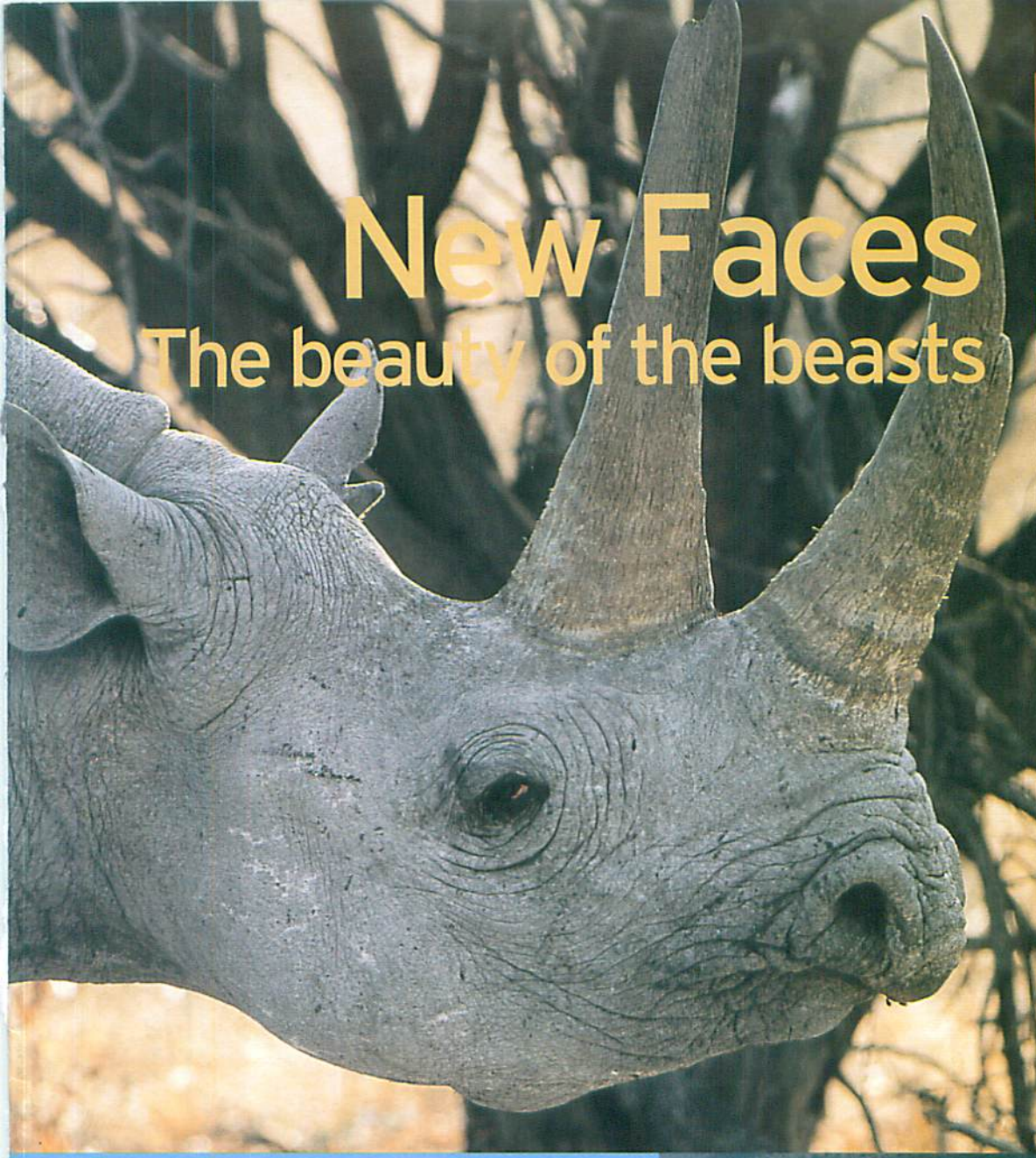


New Faces

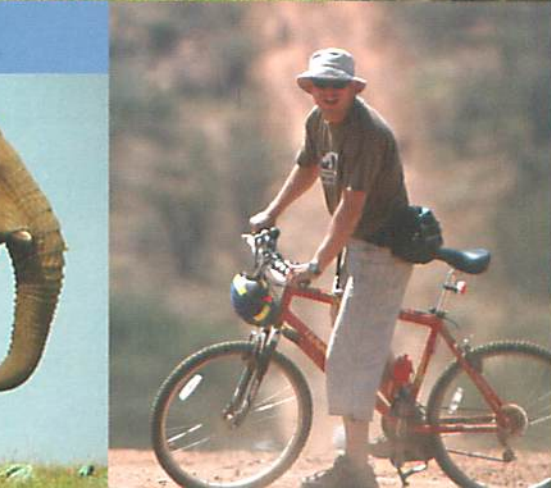
The beauty of the beasts



FOR THE



Newsletter Spring 2002



In at the pointy end



On 30 July 2001, an advert in the jobs pages of The Guardian read: "Director: Save the Rhino International". I knew immediately that I wanted the post.

After fourteen happy years in the art world, fundraising for Tate Modern and writing, publishing and selling art books (I remember giggling helplessly in my very first job when confronted by the dustjacket of "The Rhinoceros in Art". A whole book?), I was searching for a new challenge. A wildlife trip to Madagascar - with fantastic forests and extraordinary snakes, lemurs, giraffe-necked weevils and leaf-tailed geckos - convinced me that my next job should be in the environment/conservation field. Further inspiration came from some of the books I'd been reading: "Song of the Dodo" by David Quammen, "Congo Journey" by Redmond O'Hanlon, and "Last to Chance to See" by Douglas Adams.

Rhinos aren't the most obviously beautiful creatures on the planet, but they do need our help. The funny thing is, once lodged in your brain, rhinos crop up everywhere: a life-sized copper rhino

in the garden centre ("Are you sure it won't fit through the front door?"); rhino stamps on postcards from a friend in Tanzania; another life-sized rhino, this time in fetching red plastic, in the Pempidou Centre.

Now, of course, I've even met real rhinos. In November, Neil (SRI's Events Manager) and I visited Port Lympne Wild Animal Park to discuss the Rhino Cycle we're holding this July. When Berry White, Rhino Keeper, leant over a gate and cooed to her herd, they came running. Scratch a Port Lympne black rhino behind the ears (don't try this on safari) and its hind legs buckle from sheer delight. If only rhinos were so readily found in the wild.

Most of my time at SRI has so far been spent learning the ropes, tackling the Honda Challenge, getting to grips with 2002's calendar of events, drafting next year's budget and mapping out the new areas that we want to explore. There's a lot to do.

In spare moments I'm also training for my first ever marathon. Not so much

leading from the front as from somewhere near the back I fear. A friend has sponsored me on a spread-bet basis. If I break the women's world record, he goes bankrupt. On current form I'll end up owing him money. Working for SRI is an all-round commitment.

Another friend has just given me a CD, "Salad Days" by Adrian Belew, (guitarist with King Crimson). The first track opens with the words: "I'm a lone rhinoceros / ain't a hell of a lot of us / left in this world". Which makes me all the more glad to be working with a great organisation to save as many rhinos as we can.

Cathy Dean, Director



First baby Sumatran Rhino born into captivity in 112 years!

Throughout 2001, rhino conservationists and members of the zoo-community around the world were anxiously following the pregnancy of Cincinnati Zoos Sumatran rhino Emi (she has had five miscarriages since 1997).

The Sumatran rhino species is endemic to Indonesia, and fewer than 300 exist worldwide. The last successful zoo birth of a Sumatran rhino occurred in Calcutta, in 1889 (hence the anticipation!).

Much to everyone's relief, Emi gave birth to a male calf on 13th September last year. The calf, pictured left, is called Andalas (the original name for Sumatra). I'm sure you will agree he is a beauty!

Barbara Rish, PR/Media Director at Cincinnati Zoo, told Save the Rhino: "the successful birth of the first Sumatran rhino to be bred and born in captivity in 112 years is a monumental breakthrough. The birth of Andalas will hopefully enable managed breeding of Sumatran rhinos in captivity to become a viable part of the conservation strategy to save this highly endangered species."

Cincinnati Zoo is part of a global program dedicated to the conservation of this phenomenally rare rhino. Please see their website www.cincyzoo.org for more info.

Kirstie Wielandt



Births, new sightings, and the loss of a matriarch at Save the Rhino Trust



2002 began with new enthusiasm, thanks to the support of SRI: a new vehicle, two reconditioned Landrover engines and funding for the team are helping Save the Rhino Trust tackle the challenges of the desert-dwelling rhino monitoring programme. The remote and dry conditions make it hard going, not only for the animals we study but also for the staff and vehicles used to monitor this unique population of black rhinos.

SRT's five teams have located rhinos not seen for many months, and more calves have been recorded to add to the year's successful breeding. Now that most of the females have young calves, the onset of the dry season necessitates close monitoring by SRT patrols. We've enjoyed good rains in the desert since 1995, but after the driest December for thirty years, Namibia may be facing a drought. Fingers are crossed that our main rainy season (March-April) will make up for the poor rains during North-western Namibia's "small rains" (December-January). As springs dry up and good quality food becomes less abundant the rhinos' condition is closely monitored by SRT. Already, the effects of limited food are beginning to show, with a report from the camel team in the mountains that Lucy is getting thin and her one-year-old calf is missing. The team will follow up her progress this month.

David Stirling's visit to the project in February was a chance to watch the SRT team in operation and see first-hand the difficult conditions they work in. During his visit, we located Rita- one of the first rhinos ever recorded in the area. Twenty years of data on Rita's breeding and movement patterns are on file. She's one

of the oldest rhinos in the area (30+ years), and when we examined her dung we found half-chewed food, indicating heavy wear on her teeth and an inability to feed properly. Her strength was gone and she was unable even to get up. We were left with no option other than to call in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism vet and have Rita put down.

On a happier note, the black rhinoceros of North-western Namibia are now showing a boom in numbers, having recovered from near extinction. A vital factor in the recovery has been the twenty years of monitoring by SRT, contributing to the turnaround in poaching. Much of SRT's work is now focused on the gathering and analysis of data on individual rhinos, and the reporting of these findings to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. As numbers increase, the hope is to see some of these black rhinos reintroduced to similar arid areas where they used to occur. The death of Rita from old age is an indication of the success of the programme, and it emphasises the importance of continued data gathering to prevent the re-establishment of poaching and allow informed decisions on the management of this population.

The success of this programme has already had far-reaching implications for the conservation of wildlife resources and rural development in the region. It is a prime example of the role that a flagship species can take as a strategic resource in both the conservation of biological diversity and the reduction of poverty through a growing tourist industry. However, this is a free-ranging population, living on communal land outside Namibia's protected areas, allowing very limited control of the rhino habitat. With the increase in tourism, the need to limit access to the rhino area is important. SRT is working with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, traditional authorities and emerging conservancies to ensure appropriate management plans are implemented to safeguard the future of this population. We thank SRI and its supporters for their commitment to the programme over the following three years.

Mike Hearn, Director of Research, Save the Rhino Trust



Footprints in the Namibian sand

Tracking animal footprints, or spoor as they are known, is an ancient technique used to follow and interpret animal movements. The ability to read footprints, marks and dung left on the ground is sadly a dying art. However, trackers from Save the Rhino Trust in Namibia are using these techniques as part of their vital monitoring work and are incredibly skilled at following spoor to find rhinos. The patrol teams know all the rhinos in the area, and when spoor are found on patrol they are followed until the rhino is located. The different rhinos are then identified using clues such as marks on the ears, and horn size and shape. However, despite their poor eyesight, rhinos have incredible hearing and a keen sense of smell: often they detect their human observers and run away or charge at the disturbance.

It seems intuitive that the number of rhino footprints present in an area is linked to the number of rhinos living there. I have been testing this theory with SRT to develop an

additional monitoring technique that won't disturb the rhinos. I spent three hot, dry but wonderful months driving along the rough 4 x 4 vehicle tracks with SRT trackers Himba, Andries and Elvis, looking for rhino spoor crossing the roads. Rhinos have very distinctive footprints, quite large and circular, with the three toes clearly visible. The ability of the trackers to spot footprints in even the stoniest terrain never failed to amaze me and was vital to the success of this work. Every time we found spoor, we recorded how old it was and took note of its location. SRT's meticulous monitoring records of sightings were used to calculate the number of rhinos in the area. The data was analysed and it was found that the number of rhinos in an area is strongly correlated with the number of times rhino footprints were found crossing the roads in dry riverbeds.

This means that there is potential in the future for rhinos to be monitored by simply driving along the roads and counting spoor,

without actually seeing or disturbing them. As this is quicker and easier than locating all the different rhinos, it is also a cheaper technique. The amazing recovery of these rhino from intensive poaching during the 1970s and 1980s is due to collaboration between the government, NGOs and local people in the area. This discovery will allow all stakeholders to be involved in vital monitoring work, without increasing levels of disturbance to the rhinos.

**Jo Shaw, MSC Conservation Biology
Researcher & previous SRI Projects
Manager**

The toughest footrace on earth: the Marathon des Sables

By the time you read this, the Chairman, Founder Director, two Trustees and one employee of SRI will be blistered, sunburnt and painfully thin, all for the sake of rhino and community-based conservation projects in Africa. With luck, they and the other three members of the Save the Rhino team will be back in the UK, not lost in the Sahara.

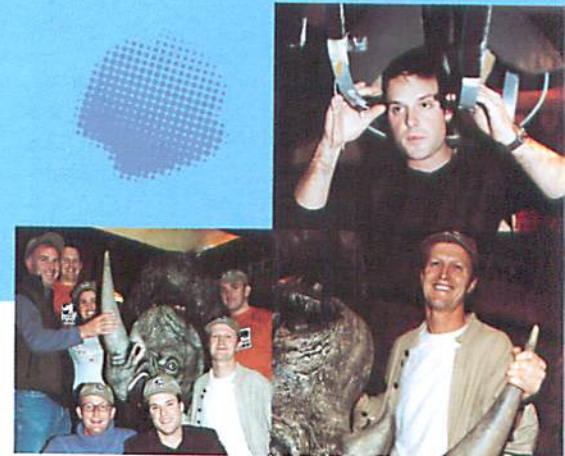
The Marathon des Sables (MdS, aka the Marquis de Sade) certainly deserves its title, "the toughest footrace on earth". By comparison, the London Marathon is a walk in the park. Professor Mike Stroud wrote in his book, "The Survival of the Fittest":

"Most people, when they hear about the 'Marathon des Sables', are surprised that anybody should be so stupid as to attempt to run such a distance in the Sahara. Then, when they realise that it is not a mere marathon but a true ultra-distance race, they decide that the word 'stupid' is far too mild."

The ambition of the SRI team goes beyond even these extremes: the runners intend to be the first team to complete the MdS in costume. The famous rhino suit, already worn in the London, New York, Dublin, and Comrades Marathons is going to the Sahara desert.

As this newsletter goes to press, we have already raised over £100,000 in pledges. The BBC's Really Wild Show is making a programme about the MdS and the projects we support (BBC2 on Sunday 2 June). The Daily Mail published an article about our campaign that resulted in wonderful letters and contributions from its readers.

Although this reaches you too late for pre-race pledges, it is still possible to make donations to the MdS/SRI fund. Please visit the MdS section of our website and click through to the donations page. After the most aching, thirsty, custy, exhausting experience of their lives, the team will really appreciate your generosity.



The facts are incredible:

- Runners must cover 230 kilometres in 7 days, including a full marathon stage and a non-stop stage of 80 kilometres in under 40 hours
- Temperatures soar as high as 125°F, dropping to freezing at night
- Competitors have to carry all their own food and gear for the whole race. Only 9 litres of water per day and an open-sided Berber tent are provided
- The terrain varies from rocky plains and lake beds to sand dunes
- Many fail to finish

The team is even more incredible:
Nick Baker, Neil Bridgland, Robert Devereux,
Christina Franco Graham, Bryan Hemmings,
Carl Rawes, George Stephenson and
David Stirling.

Cathy Dean

