

6.2 SUMMARIES OF PAPERS PRESENTED

6.2.1. A REVIEW OF RHINOCEROS MANAGEMENT IN ZULULAND, SOUTH AFRICA

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In view of the plight of the black rhinoceros and the northern square-lipped rhino, it is of value to consider the management of two populations which stemmed from low numbers yet today are perhaps the most secure in Africa.

Square-lipped rhino were initially captured and translocated with a view to distributing the population to enhance its survival. Subsequently removal became necessary in the interests of habitat management while the initial small-scale capture and removal caused no severe imbalance to the population. A higher level of unplanned removal led to an imbalance in the sex/age ratio of the population. While the sex ratio imbalance has largely been corrected, the restoration of the normal age distribution will take up to 30 years.

Black rhino capture and translocation commenced with the movement of animals living outside the game reserves. The black rhino has not been viewed as being a threat to its habitat consequently removal of animals was only for the purpose of establishing new breeding populations.

The failure of the Hluhluwe Game Reserve black rhino population to increase was initially viewed as being due to a limit in the amount of Acacia scrub in their habitat. In an effort to change this, range management practices in the reserve were altered. Subsequent interpretation of available data however suggests that the population is at carrying capacity, and is unlikely to increase. The population level is expected to fluctuate in accordance with prevailing rainfall cycles. These changes in the population will be a result of changes in natality and calf survival rather than adult mortality.

The population is now being managed to keep it below carrying capacity in order that it may provide a sustained harvest for translocation.

Current Natal Parks Board policy for the square-lipped rhino is that after a reduction in the population, a constant removal rate will be determined. As the sub-species is secure no policy exists as to the dispersal of animals within southern Africa other than that conservation areas are accorded some preference.

The policy regarding the dispersal of black rhino is that these animals are not sold but donated at cost to other conservation organisations. The Natal Parks Board require any area to which black rhino are likely to be translocated, to have habitat suitable for at least 30 adult animals.