

# REF NEWS

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## FROM THE REF DESK...

As we enter a new constitutional era in April, change will be inevitable in all aspects of our environment. The Rhino & Elephant Foundation will be challenged as the two species we so much care about do not appear to be on top of the agenda, as more emphasis is likely to be placed on the habitat and ecosystem rather than on the protection of individual species.

The Foundation strongly believes that a specialist organisation such as ours will continue to play a major role in the field of rhino and elephant conservation. Unfortunately commercial poaching still continues and the threat to rhinos in particular will intensify as South Africa now has the largest national herds of both the black and white rhino on the continent.

Strong anti-poaching measures will be necessary but the equipment and the logistics cost money, funds which have to be found from all concerned South Africans. The Rhino & Elephant Foundation is holding a gala event in June this year, the main objective being to raise much needed funds for crisis situations, like translocations of rhinos to safe areas, specialised equipment for game scouts, emergency funds for vehicle repairs and spare parts – to name a few.

Since its inception the Rhino & Elephant Foundation has undertaken major projects for the protection and well-being of rhinos and elephants. It is our intention that, despite the changes taking place, we will continue to make a significant contribution to conserving a valuable part of our heritage which belongs to us all in South Africa.

## TRIBUTE TO AN ENVIRONMENTAL CRUSADER – RICK LOMBA

It is with sorrow that we record the untimely and tragic death of Rick Lomba on 15 March 1994. Rick, an acclaimed wildlife documentary-maker, was filming the rescue and relocation of animals from the Luanda Zoo in Angola to South Africa, when he was attacked and killed by a tiger which had escaped from its cage.

Rick had worked tirelessly on environmental issues in recent years. He virtually single-handedly put a stop to the proposed dredging of the Okavango Delta in Botswana for a diamond mine about three years ago. He publicised the proposal, got Greenpeace involved and insisted on an unbiased environmental impact assessment being carried out. The result was that the local communities became involved, and the Botswana government had no option but to accede to the will of the people.

Rick was particularly concerned about the damaging effect of the cattle industry on Botswana – an industry heavily subsidised by the EEC. Apart from the fact that cattle are unsuited to this country's drought-prone and fragile environment, the mandatory EEC regulations governing the production of beef necessitated the erection of buffalo fences across the country. These had the effect of denying hundreds of thousands of migrating animals, particularly zebra and wildebeest, access to their seasonal water sources and they died at the fences. Rick documented this in his film, 'End of Eden,' and it led him to further investigate the allocation of international donor aid in Africa – which is often applied to unsuitable projects.



Rick was respected, highly principled and a dedicated campaigner for the environment. The conservation world mourns his loss.

### DR RICHARD LEAKEY RESIGNS

Dr Richard Leakey, director of Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS), has snubbed Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi and quit – two weeks after the Kenyan leader rejected his earlier offer to resign.

The dispute centred on Moi's order that a substantial percentage of KWS resources be spent on wildlife outside national parks and game reserves and gazetted sanctuaries.

Dr David Western has been appointed as Leakey's successor.

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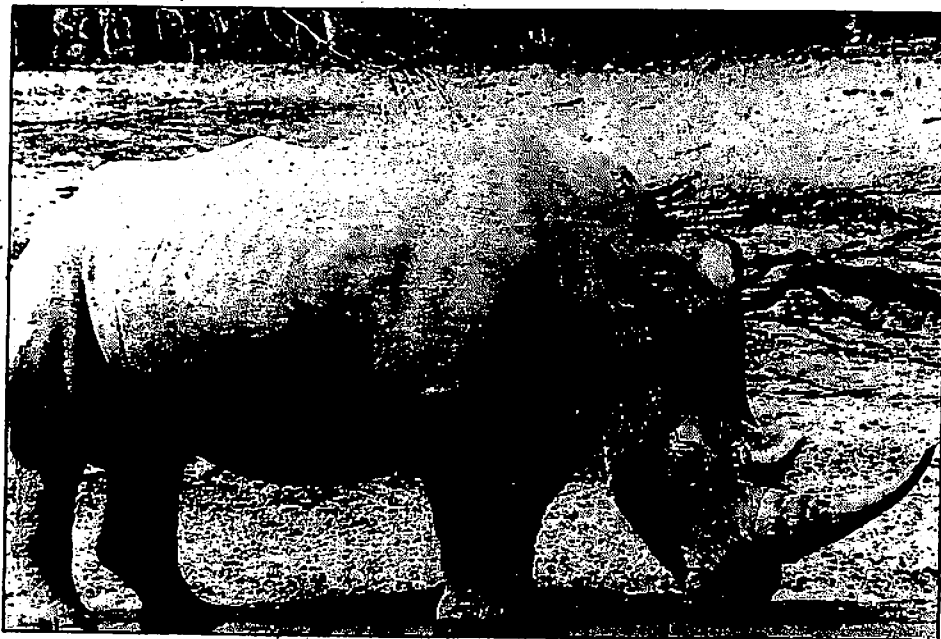


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"The Roots of Heaven... are found in the grass roots of the earth, in the vaulting skies and in the hearts of those that love and understand."





## RHINO FACTS

**How 'old' is the rhino?** Rhino belong to the mammalian order Perissodactyla, a group that had its origins in the Eocene Period some 50-60 million years ago.

**Were rhinos ever found in Europe?** Yes, the woolly rhinoceros, along with the woolly mammoth, roamed widely across Europe about 15 million years ago.

**Who is the rhino related to?** The rhino's closest relations are the tapir and the horse.

**Do all rhinos have two horns?** No, Javan and Indian rhinos only have one horn, which is short, blunt and rounded at the tip.

**What is rhino horn actually made of?** Nothing more than densely compacted hair - or more scientifically - a composition of tightly compressed hairlike fibres which are attached to the skin and not the skull. Rhino horn therefore consists not of true hair,

but is microscopically more similar to the hooves of ungulates.

**Are rhinos sociable?** The black, white and Indian bulls tend to be solitary and territorial. Cows are more sociable and sometimes found in groups with other cows and calves. Very little is known about the social habits of the Javan or Sumatran rhino as both are secretive and almost impossible to study in their dense tropical forest habitats.

**Are rhinos maternal?** Extremely. Cows and calves display strong bonds and mothers will defend their offspring ferociously. Black rhino calves, who run *behind* their mothers, suffer greater predation than white rhino calves, who *precede* their mothers and are thus in a better position to be defended.

**Do rhinos have any natural enemies?** Stray calves occasionally fall prey to predators such as hyaena or lion, but a healthy, full grown rhino is more than a match for either. **Man still poses the only real threat to the rhino.**

*Courtesy: Save The Rhino International, UK.*

a brief overview of South Africa's elephant management policy, mentioning specifically that elephant culling was introduced in the Kruger National Park in 1976 as a means of controlling elephant numbers. Approximately 12 000 elephants had been culled between then and now. The audience was then left to watch the film and make its own decision as to whether elephant 'management' was right or wrong.

'Keepers of the Kingdom' is a film about the elephants of Tsavo National Park in Kenya. It documents the history of the vegetation changes which took place at Tsavo over a thirty year period where initially an 'over population' of 45 000 elephants modified the habitat to the extent where hardly a tree was left standing. It was decided not to cull - and Nature stepped in. A prolonged drought killed 10 000 elephants over a four year period, and this was followed by a severe ivory poaching onslaught, the combined result of which left Tsavo with just 6 500 elephants.



*Left to right: Clive Walker, chairman, Simon Trevor, guest speaker and John Ilsley, vice-chairman.*

The previously dense bush of Tsavo had been changed by the large number of elephants to a park of grasslands and plains. The plains game animals returned to the park and slowly but surely, trees began to grow. Seeds which had been lying dormant in the dry dung of elephants during the drought years germinated when the rains came. Tsavo had not been destroyed by elephants. It had been changed by elephants.

Simon is a proponent of non-interference in the management of elephants, and his film certainly supports his view. He says, however, that in most cases, Nature is not left to run her course.

## ELEPHANTS: TO CULL OR NOT TO CULL? SIMON TREVOR SAYS NO

On 23 February, the Rhino & Elephant Foundation held its first film/awareness evening this year at the Military History Museum in Saxonwold, Johannesburg. Our guest was Simon Trevor, acclaimed wildlife documentary-

maker from Kenya, and the Foundation screened his latest documentary, 'Keepers of the Kingdom.'

Prior to the film, John Ilsley, the Foundation's vice chairman, gave

What powers this man in his crusade to save the rhino? Michael Werikhe doesn't even like to walk or talk very much. But in this case, the ends justify the means.

Determined to find a job in 'wildlife', he started work for the Kenyan game board at a place known as 'Ivory Room'. (Before the ban on hunting in Kenya, elephant tusks were sold at auctions in Mombasa). To some people, sorting tusks was a job, for Michael it was a horror-chamber. He quit his job and eventually found work with Associated Vehicle Assemblers (AVA) in Mombasa. AVA's management noticed Michael's passion for nature and arranged for him to give talks to the workers on snakes. Yet it was not enough for this man with a dream. He wanted to do something, but what could he do? Michael's attention was drawn to the rhino which he saw as the focus of all the threatened wildlife he so loved. Despite Kenya's hunting ban and the plight of the rhino's demise reaching international levels, rhinos were still dying. He decided to walk from Mombasa to Nairobi to raise funds for the rhino.

AVA was very supportive and agreed to give him time off. Michael went to Nairobi looking for sponsorship and convinced the East African Wildlife Society and other wildlife clubs that he was not a con-man.

Soon he set off - taking a snake with him as a talking point when he met people along the way. The rewards were much greater than anticipated. This was a turning point in wildlife conservation in Africa as it was assumed that most Africans did not care about conservation. Here was a Kenyan sacrificing his own time and comfort for rhino-conservation.

Apart from the substantial amounts raised for research projects, Michael created overwhelming publicity for the rhino and over the years has walked some 5 000 kilometers in Europe and America - with one mission: to make people aware of the beautiful land and creatures of Africa, using the rhino as the symbol. When Michael needs to emphasise the urgency of his task, he only points to the figures of the

## MICHAEL WERIKHE THE RHINO MAN OF KENYA



Photo: Karen Asis.

last few decades in which Africa has lost more than 90 percent of its rhino population.

In October last year Michael Werikhe stopped over in Johannesburg, on his way to Taipei - to reassess some very negative preconceptions of Taiwan as a major player in the illegal trade of rhino horn. A warm reception and tangible signs of progress on the Taiwanese side have, by his own admission, impressed him, but his praise for Taiwan's efforts remains measured.

"In the last year or so there seems to have been some progress, I'd like to be fair on that," Werikhe said. "However, it has taken quite some time to actually make that move. A lot has been said since 1985 but it's been on paper."

"I painfully tried to look for solutions from the Taiwanese people's point of view on how best to solve some of the most vexing and mind-boggling problems affecting the survival of this seriously endangered large mammal."

In Taiwan, Michael tried to promote the double message of stiffening the current one-year or NT\$ 30 000 fine for importation or trade in rhino horn, and using a

substitute ingredient for powdered horn in traditional Chinese medicine.

"Chinese people are known for their appetites and have an eye for anything that moves, with an exception of probably insects - all is fair game for them. It is no wonder that a majority of their native creatures, snakes, mammals, fish and amphibians are threatened with extinction because of over-exploitation."

"In the company of traditional medicine men we visited several shops and were shown a wide range of herbal substitutes displayed in large quantities. I was informed that the prices of the various substitutes were very affordable to the ordinary man and that the herbs were just as effective in lowering fever - a condition believed by many people in South Asia to be treated by powdered rhino horn. As a result of heavy international pressure directed at Taiwan, mainland China, and Yemen to stop the rhino horn trade, traders in the traditional medicine shops removed all traces of rhino horn products from their shelves."

"As such, I did not see any horn or by-products on display. My fear is that the rhino horn trade has now gone underground and this could be a tricky situation in terms of monitoring the illegal trade. A number of medicine-men I interviewed told me that they had stopped prescribing rhino horn as is required by law, but openly acknowledged having registered horns and products in their possession. I am convinced beyond doubt, that the selling of rhino horn flourishes under the counter of many traditional pharmacies, despite assurance from the Government that it has stopped."

If the forthcoming CITES Conference in November 1994 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA fails to come up with a strong resolution, then we may just as well kiss the rhino good-bye."

If those remaining rhinos are saved from the poacher's bullet it will be partly due to the efforts of this unpretentious, soft-spoken Kenyan.

References:  
Fleur Ng'weno. Swara, EAWLS publication.  
Christopher Bodeen. The China Post, 8 Nov 1993.  
Personal comments by Michael Werikhe.



## A DIFFERENT KIND OF CHRISTMAS PARTY

A week before Christmas, a special party was held 'under the Fig Tree' on the banks of the Shashe river right on the border between the Tuli bushlands in Botswana and the Tuli Circle in Zimbabwe. The guests were the warden and game scouts (Department of National Parks & Wildlife Management, Zimbabwe) and their families from the Tuli Circle, and from the Botswana side, there were members of the anti-poaching unit, representatives from Customs & Immigration and the Department of Wildlife & National Parks, the warden of the Charter Reserve Conservancy and some of the landowners. The party had been organised by Rozanne Savory, who re-joined the Rhino & Elephant Foundation on 1 December, and Gareth Patterson of the Tuli Lion Trust (Botswana).

"There is no fence dividing the game areas between Botswana and Zimbabwe," Rozanne said, "just a cutline, so the animals move freely between the two countries but of course these people had never met each other before. It was good to see them chatting together, discussing their respective problems and exchanging addresses. And just enjoying themselves. The children especially had a whale of a time. I don't think many of them had ever seen a balloon or a Christmas cracker before."

This was a pilot project for about seventy people. It was done with the help of Rozanne's family and friends who provided gifts - toys, sweets, clothes, toiletries etc. The Rhino & Elephant Foundation will be developing and expanding on this idea for Christmas 1994.

*Special thanks to Rozanne's friends and family, John Hood of Tuli Safari Lodge and Daphne Sheldrick for her words of encouragement to David Mupungu and his men. Also to Mr Bame Sesa, Chief of Immigration at Botswana's Port Drift borderpost and Mr George Pangeti, Deputy Director of Zimbabwe's Department of National Parks & Wildlife Management.*

## FORTHCOMING R.E.F. EVENTS 1994

### RHINO & ELEPHANT CELEBRITY GALA

A black tie dinner-dance is to be held in the Carlton Ballroom, Johannesburg, on Friday, 3rd June 1994.

This exciting function includes a talk by David Shepherd, who will be flown to South Africa by British Airways especially for this event, the presentation of the REF Conservation Award and an auction of donated collector's items.

Each table will be hosted by a well-known South African personality.

The cost will be R2 000,00 per corporate table (10 people) and R150,00 (R300,00 per couple) for individual tickets.

For more information and table bookings - please contact the REF office.

### FILM EVENING

Illustrated talk on the fate of rhinos in Africa - by Clive Walker, chairman of REF.

Date: Wednesday, 20 July 1994 at the Museum of Military History, Saxonwold, Johannesburg.  
Tickets: R25,00 donation per person - including cheese and wine.

Please diarise!

### DONATIONS

We are grateful for the generous funds received from the following individuals and companies:

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... and as always our members.



## RHINO CAMP Clive Walker Safaris

Clive Walker Safaris recently opened Rhino Camp in Lapalala Wilderness in the Waterberg mountains of the north-western Transvaal - a temperate, malaria-free area only three hours by road from Johannesburg.

Lapalala boasts the first population of black rhino introduced into a private reserve in South Africa.

Guests are accommodated in four two-bedded safari-style luxury tents with en-suite facilities.

Rhino Camp offers an exclusive destination at an affordable price - R195,00 per person per night inclusive of walks, game drives and meals.

For further information please contact Central Reservations:

Tel (011) 453-7645/6/7,  
Fax (011) 453-7649.

**10% discount for REF members.**



The Rhino Trading Company, in association with the South African Rhinos Rugby League side, is selling these T-shirts for R30,00 plus R3,00 postage and packing. REF receives a percentage of the proceeds of sale. These colourful eye-catching T-shirts are obtainable from The Rhino Trading Company, P O Box 655, Buccleuch 2066, South Africa.  
Phone (011) 804-1839.