

WILDERNESS
SANCTUARY

No. 20 1996

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE WILDERNESS TRUST OF SOUTHERN AFRICA AND LAPALALA WILDERNESS



Clive Walker '93

WILDERNESS

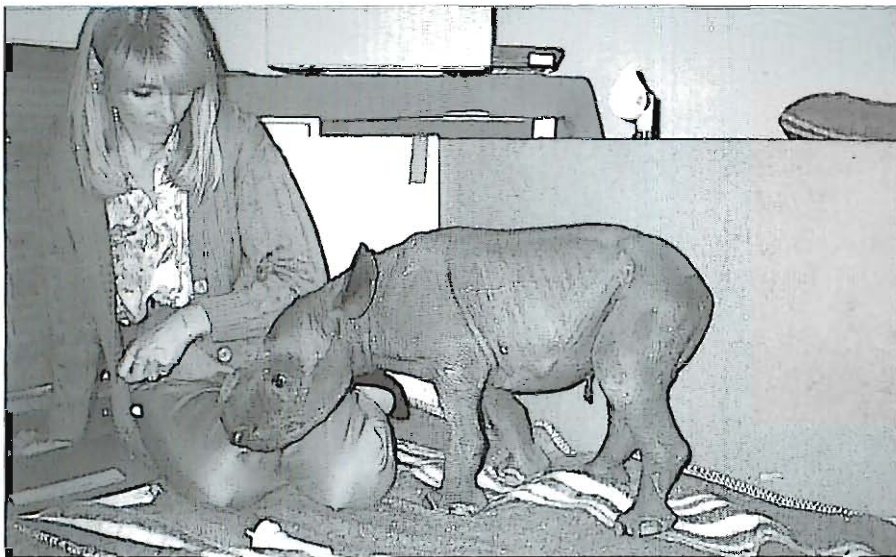
SANCTUARY

No. 20 1996

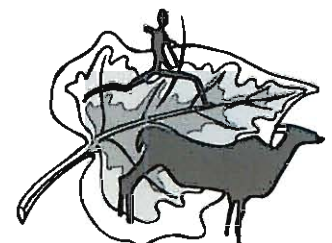


Contents

	Page
Chairman's Report	1
Lapalala Wilderness 15th Anniversary - 1996	5
Moving to Save the Black Rhino	8
Time for a Change - The South African Environment and Human Needs	9
Training Trainers in Nature Education	11
Rhino Camp Round-Up	12
Around Our Boma	13
Munyane, the Orphaned White Rhino	14



Bwana the black rhinoceros calf, aged four days, with his foster mother, Karen Trender, in his bedroom after he had been moved from Onderstepoort Veterinary Hospital. See photo of Bwana as he is today, with Conita Walker and Anna Merz in Around our Boma.



Member of
IUCN
The World Conservation Union

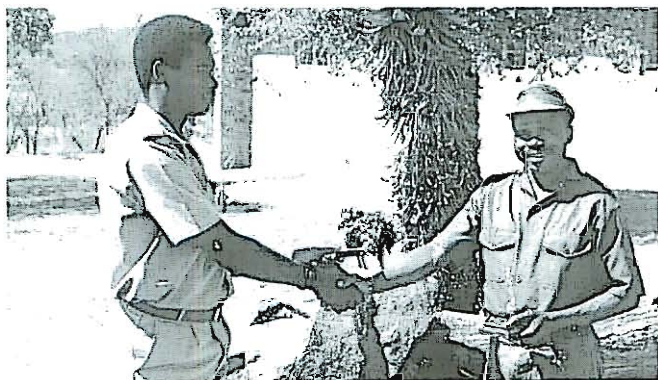
Moving to Save the Black Rhino

As the black rhino plunges towards extinction - there were perhaps 65 000 at the beginning of the 1970s and we are now down to about 2 500 throughout Africa - we are witnessing the demise of a creature whose ancestors roamed planet Earth for some 30 million years. Through greed and indifference, this third largest of Africa's land mammals is highly endangered.

What can we do to prevent the world from losing such an extraordinary animal? In spite of our highly developed technological skills, our ability to fly to the moon, decode DNA and produce miraculous drugs that can save lives, it seems that we are incapable of preventing the extinction of so many of the world's creatures.

In the case of the rhino, his horn is his dilemma. The traditions and cultures of the people who have used rhino horn for thousands of years have no idea of the plight these creatures face, or even in many respects from whence they come. The issues surrounding the demise of the rhinoceros are both complex and sensitive. In a remote area less than 30 kilometres from Lapalala there are men, women and children who have to walk great distances every day in order to obtain a fresh supply of drinking water. There is no water-borne sanitation here, no electricity, the roads are appalling and unemployment is rife. Let us be completely honest with ourselves: if your priority was the well-being of your family, would you have even the remotest consideration for an animal - endangered or not - that is living in close proximity to you? If you found yourself in these circumstances I believe you might very well risk your life by climbing through an electrified fence to take the life of a rhinoceros whose horn you could remove in five minutes with an axe.

Living in New York or London, one sees it entirely differently. You may even believe that killing poachers is the right way to go about things. It's not that simple.



Martiens Phago, Field Ranger of Lapalala, receiving the award for best student from Michael Melanzi, Senior Training Officer, on the occasion of the passing out parade at Songimvelo Game Reserve



Kate Groch explains rhino conservation to a group of students from the SOS Children's Village, Mamelodi

Killing people in defence of wildlife poses enormous problems. Furthermore, however many poachers have been killed, it has not prevented the rhino's demise. We only have to look to the north of South Africa to realise what fate befell those countries' rhinoceros populations.

The spotlight has now turned squarely on South Africa and, during the last five years, we have lost no less than 78 rhinos - at least five of which occurred on private land. Rhino conservation costs a great deal of money, not only for the government, but also for the private sector. There are also concerns that our enormous social upliftment programme will lead to diminishing budgets for the country's wildlife departments. Will South Africa follow the same route as other African countries to the north, where lack of funding has led to the decline of rhino and elephant populations?

We believe that what we really need is a concerted effort to educate and make people aware of the value of creatures such as rhinos and, for that matter, of wildlife in general.

Can we save the rhino? Yes we can, but it will require a concerted effort in as much as we need to ensure that the men who guard and protect Africa's wildlife are well-led, well-trained and well-equipped. We need to enlighten people, be it through tourism, social upliftment and benefits, job opportunities or education. Rings of steel and guns alone won't do it.



Strategies must be developed to ensure that rhinos are high on any tourist's "must see" list. The region of the Waterberg Mountains in the Northern Province has the potential to accomplish this as it has the fourth highest concentration of rhinos in South Africa



Lapalala was also the inspiration and the driving force behind the establishment of the Waterberg Nature Conservancy which today encompasses numerous private reserves over an area approaching 100 000 ha.

In conjunction with the Wilderness Trust, which operates the Lapalala Wilderness School, no less than 40 000 pupils and teachers have made use of the area's excellent environmental education facilities.

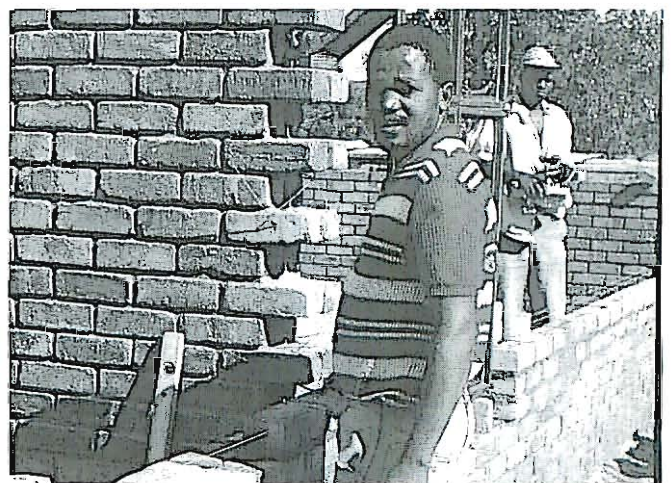
What we are ultimately celebrating is not only the fact that we may take pride in what has been achieved, but more importantly to honour and record our appreciation for the dedicated men and women who, over the past 15 years, have made Lapalala what it is today. In May 1996, the dedication of these people was acknowledged with long-service awards. They represent the greatest achievement of all that has been undertaken. They are symbolic not only of our concern for rhinos and the environment, but also of our commitment to people which extends far beyond the boundaries of this game reserve.

I would like to pay special tribute to Dale Parker who believed in what I told him and, with his wife Elizabeth, provided the wherewithal that has made this place what it is today. I believe he found a new dimension in life when he took his share certificates out of the filing cabinet and made, what is in my opinion, the greatest single contribution to conservation in this country. This was not simply a financial decision - he truly believed it was the right thing to do.

Tens of thousands of people from all walks of life have benefitted spiritually, educationally and physically as a result of that Saturday morning way back in January 1981 when we stood high on the cliffs above Lepotedi and gazed out over that spectacular setting. I knew then as I do now that it was the right thing to do.



Environmental education is one of the pillars of Lapalala's conservation of the Waterberg's bio-diversity and its tourism potential. This is linked to community development and endangered species conservation.



Klaas Mashasha, a local builder from Bakenberg, is an excellent example of the partnerships that exist between landowners and the nearby community of Bakenberg. All construction that takes place at Lapalala Wilderness is undertaken by Klaas's company on a contract basis and provides employment for a further seven people.

The fact that the private sector has been given the opportunity to become directly involved with a highly endangered species like the black rhino augurs well for the future of rhinoceros conservation.



Bwana, the black rhinoceros, being fed a handful of cubes by a young participant from the SOS Children's Village

Time For A Change The South African Environment and Human Needs

Clive Walker

It is now more than two years since South Africa's Government of National Unity came into being and with it, came some startling changes within society. What a joy to be welcomed throughout the world on equal terms, to be able to go virtually wherever one chooses and to be truly a part of global concern for the environment. Some people in the country have always been concerned, but because of apartheid policies, we were long looked upon as pariahs in the conservation world.

Lamenting decades of indifference to the bulk of South Africa's people is pointless. Yes, we need to put all that behind us. President Mandela has certainly been an inspiration in bringing about reconciliation and change. But we do need to remain mindful of what the years of injustice did, both to people and to our environment. And we also need to move quickly and positively, if we are to redress many of the past practices that chiefly favoured the minority and forgot the majority.

Firstly, we must recognise that "the environment" means far more than simply conserving individual species and the natural world. Saving the black rhino is important; caring about people is important. Environmental activity must straddle the divide between them. The black rhino has become the flagship of African conservation, but if your most pressing needs were the safety and well-being of your family, saving the black rhino would be your

last consideration. Indeed, saving black rhino has been seen in our society as an elitist and mainly white concern. As long as the majority of South Africans were denied the opportunity of a decent life, as long as we were falling down on the job of caring for people, caring for the black rhino has verged on seeming frivolous.

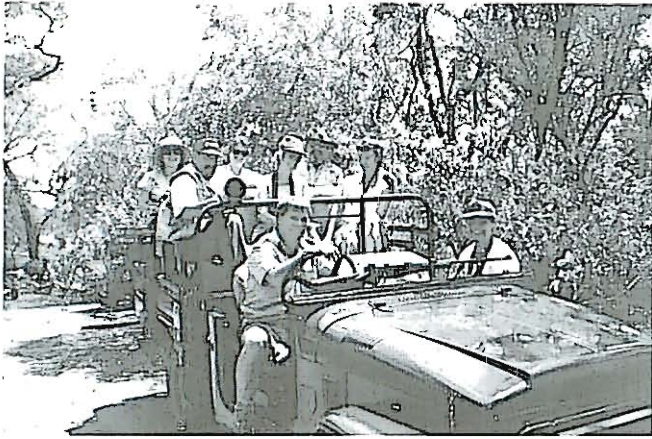
In spite of the enormous differences between the "haves" and the "have nots," I must challenge the school of thought that proclaims: "To hell with the rhino, plant a tree."

The Interim Constitution of South Africa declared that "every person shall have the right to an environment not detrimental to his or her health or well-being." Now, consider just one dimension of environment: water. According to the Reconstruction and Development Programme's draft Rural Development Strategy, 65 per cent of rural people in South Africa do not have access to clean water. In the Waterberg protected area for which I am responsible, we have all the water we need. Yet a short trip into neighbouring farming areas reveals people struggling to get a bucket of water.

In such a context, it is not surprising that many environmental issues are likely to be placed at a low priority level, except were they visibly and directly affect communities. The question of water does so, but there are numerous other issues that are not going to receive much attention by government. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has long been regarded, and for the moment still is, as the "Cinderella" department within the government. Past governments did not take the environment as seriously as they should have, and there are concerns that the present government won't either. Whether that is true or not remains to be seen.

At issue here are broader matters that go beyond the provision of water, vital though that is. But even in that regard, to wait for government to solve all our problems is naive. We need a strong Ministry of Environment, certainly, and it needs to be elevated to a status equal to that of any other department, partly because many environmental issues carry over into other government departments, such as those responsible for other resources, toxic waste, agriculture, mining, etc. Beyond government, at the corporate and non-governmental organisation level, there are also many aspects that are being tackled vigorously. Given the chance, people outside elected governments can begin to take on the broader picture.

Of the nine provinces within South Africa, the Northern Province faces some of the most serious environmental problems. It is the least developed in terms of tourism and yet has enormous potential. It has spectacular scenery and is in some respects, the last frontier within South Africa, with vast areas largely uninhabited, still intact, and capable of being turned over to wildlife and tourism. The government recognises the key



Tourism provides job opportunities, partnerships and, more importantly, the chance to demonstrate meaningful benefits to local communities - are we able to rise to these challenges?

consideration that tourism provides job opportunities. Finding employment for people and developing all the other attendant benefits from wildlife are going to lead the way. The provincial government can support but cannot fund evolution of this kind, and this is where the private sector will play such a vital role. The government has created an advisory forum; if those in power are serious in their belief that private enterprise should now pick up the ball - and if they make opportunities available - then they can concentrate on governing and let the private sector become the engine of tourism development. Bear in mind that I am talking about only one of nine regions and while most are better off than this province, similar potential exists elsewhere.

Eight members of the ten-member Northern Province forum are from the private sector and their interests go far beyond wildlife and tourism. We hope to tackle a broad range of issues, in conjunction with government. I am interested in three areas: environmental education and expanding that concept along the lines of the environmental school already in place at Lapalala Wilderness, which currently hosts upwards of 3 000 children and teachers annually - we need to develop a similar approach within rural communities; second, I believe that we need to look at the links between tourism potential, employment opportunities, and mutual partnerships - an example would be the development of a Biosphere Conservancy, with local communities benefitting directly and being part of management; and third, the provision of adequate clean water.

The Waterberg Nature Conservancy, of which I am currently Chairman, encompasses an area of some 100 000 hectares, made up of 16 privately owned reserves. Within the conservancy, we can steer and encourage landowners to look beyond rhinos and elephants, game drives and bush breakfasts. People living less than thirty kilometres away from this conservancy exist on the other side of despair. How can we hope to get them to remotely believe in the conservation of the environment - or an impulse to take responsibility for it - if we don't make some effort to



Are endangered species more important than people?

bring about change? If we want to hold onto our wildlife and wild areas, we need to bring a lot more people onto the "game drive."

I think I can best sum it up in the words of Professor Dan Archer of the Institute of Natural Resources in Pretoria. He is a key member of the 20-20 team: We need "a vision, a campaign and a rallying call for action, aimed at achieving an environmentally sustainable South Africa by the year 2020 . . . a winning nation that our children will be proud to inherit, a better place for everyone, a desirable place to reside and an enticing place to visit. The 20-20 vision believes that we must build in partnership to become an environmentally sustainable nation. Everyone's resources are limited. No one group or sector, whether it be governmental, business or unions, researchers or community-based groups, investors or aid agencies . . . can move ahead alone and expect to make significant progress. For too long, those with an environmental interest have been prone to work independently . . . to provoke confrontation . . . to protect turf . . . even to defend an ego."

The 20-20 vision acknowledges that the environment is more than endangered species and protected areas. The reality is that our environment must satisfy the full spectrum of human needs.



Children learning the value and importance of water