

Shibula al 'die hof gemaak'

Natuur liefhebbers het verlede jaar met groot belangstelling die reis van Shibula, die 'wilde dame' van die Lissabonse Dieretuin, na die Augrabies-waterval Nasionale Park in Suid-Afrika op die televisieprogram 50/50 gevolg. Dit het 'n seereis van Lissabon tot by Kaapstad, 'n vlug met 'n Hercules C130 van die Suid-Afrikaanse Lugmag na Upington en toe 120 kilometer padlans tot by die park ingesluit. Die reis is gefinansier deur Lagamed Pharmaceuticals en David Shepherd se bewaringstrust wat saam R250 000 vir die bewaring van swartrenosters ingesamel het. Lagamed het oor die afgelope paar jaar al bykans een miljoen rand vir bewaringsprojekte ingesamel.

Hierdie reis was egter nie die begin of die einde van Shibula se storie nie. Shibula is 'n volwasse swartrenoster van die Kaapse subspesie *Diceros bicornis bicornis* wat in die Etosha Nasionale Park in Namibië gebore is. In 1990 is sy na die Lissabonse Dieretuin gestuur as maat vir hulle swartrenosterbul. Kort na Shibula se aankoms is hy egter dood, en na oorlegpleging tussen Suid-Afrika en die direkteur van die dieretuin, dr Felix Pires, is besluit om Shibula na Afrika toe terug te stuur in ruil vir 'n versameling ander diere vir die dieretuin.

Die Augrabies-waterval Nasionale Park het in 1985 swartrenosters uit die Etosha Nasionale Park gekry in ruil vir buffels uit die Addo-olifant Nasionale Park. Oorspronklik was daar ses swartrenosters, maar een koei het met die aankoms oor die afgrond geval en haar nek gebreek. Die ander twee koeie, Blompot en Plooitjies, het so goed aangepas dat daar onderskeidelik in 1987 en 1989 twee kalwers, Blommetjie en Catherina, vir Blompot gebore is. Omdat Plooitjies oënskynlik nie van plan was om voort te plant nie, is besluit om nog 'n koei in te voer ter wille van diversiteit. Nog voor die plan ten uitvoer gebring is, is Plooitjies se eersteling, Pop, gebore.

Weens die baie teenspoed wat hervestigde swartrenosters in die verlede in suidelike Afrika getref het, is daar besluit om spesiale voorsorgmaatreëls te tref met Shibula. Terwyl sy nog in die dieretuin in Lissabon was, is daar beplan om haar kos geleidelik aan te pas om haar aan haar toekomstige, natuurlike dieet gewoon te maak. Mnr Piet Bronkhorst, die destydse parkhoof van Augrabies, is na Lissabon gestuur om alles oor Shibula se dieet en gewoontes te gaan wys word. 'n Maand se voorraad hooi is Augrabies toe gestuur sodat sy vir die eerste paar weke die kos

kon vreet waaraan sy gewoon was. Van die plaaslike kruide, struik en takke is geleidelik by haar kos gevoeg.

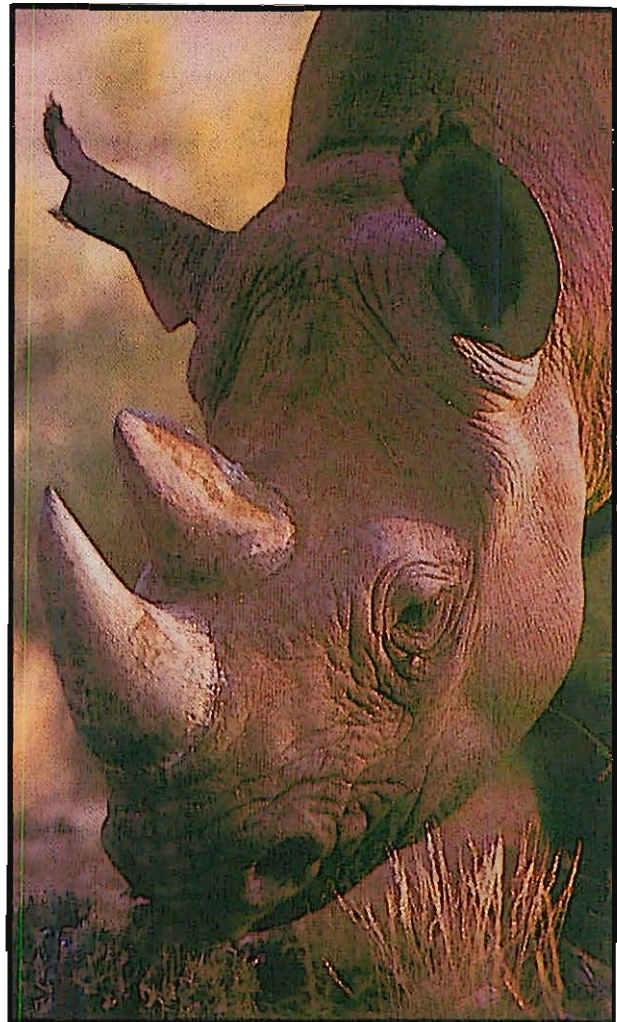
Shibula moes ook bekend gestel word aan die ander renosters van die park. Haar boma is so ontwerp dat sy hulle kon sien, hoor en ruik en hulle haar ongehinderd kon besoek. Die boma is op die grens van Ou Arrie se loopgebied opgerig. Hy is een van die park se twee swartrenosterbulle. Ou Arrie het 'n gereelde nagtelike besoeker aan die 'wilde dame' se boma geword. Onder toesig van die huidige parkhoof, mnr Nico van der Walt, is 'n grensdraad opgerig wat Ou Arrie aan die een kant en die ander renosters aan die ander kant sou hou. Om te voorkom dat Shibula met die ander koeie bots, is sy aan Ou Arrie se kant van die afskorting losgelaat.

Vir die volgende maand is haar spoor daaglik gevolg. Na haar eerste ontmoeting

met Ou Arrie was haar gesig gesny en haar skouer bebloed. Dit is egter heel natuurlike tekens van renostertoenadering. Die volgende drie weke het elkeen sy eie koers gegaan. Daarna het hulle 'n paar nagte saam deurgebring.

Tans word die twee diere weklings gemonitor. Shibula lyk heeltemal tuis. Urinemonsters word gereeld geneem sodat vasgestel kan word wanneer sy dragtig raak. Die vergroting van die twee se loopgebied word tans oorweeg. Wanneer die tyd ryp is, sal die grensdraad verwyder word. Na verwagting sal die koeie die ou grens eerbiedig en sal gevegte tot 'n minimum beperk word. Indien 'n vreedsame samesmelting met die groep geskied, sal ons met vrymoedigheid kan sê: "Shibula het tuis gekom."

Dr Anthony Hall-Martin



Bo: Die jong swartrenosterkoei, Shibula, wat 'n twee weke lange reis van die Lissabonse dieretuin af oor land, per see en per lug beleef het. • Above: The young black rhino cow, Shibula, who survived a two-week journey by road, sea and air from the Lisbon Zoo. Foto/Photo: Dr Anthony Hall-Martin.

To ensure that Shibula would have no difficulty adapting to a natural diet, her food regime and a gradual change from zoo food was carefully planned. Mr Piet Bronkhorst, the park warden of Augrabies Falls National Park at the time of the translocation, was sent to Lisbon ahead of the move to learn all about Shibula's diet and routine. A month's supply of the hay that she was accustomed to eat was also shipped to Augrabies and her menu — including carrots, apples and high energy cubes — was adhered to for her first few weeks at Augrabies. Local herbs and shrubs, and branches cut from trees along the Orange River, were slowly introduced into her diet. She was soon enjoying local delicacies like black thorn, *Acacia mellifera*, and Karoo boer-bean, *Schotia afra*.

As Shibula's diet was gradually being changed to include more local food and less exotic items, a start was made with her social introduction to the Augrabies rhino population. Her boma had been designed with generous spaces between the poles making up the walls so that it would be easier for her to establish visual, auditory and olfactory contact with the residents. The other animals were free to visit the boma and make guarded contact with Shibula.

An added precaution was the building of Shibula's boma on the edge of the territory of one of the two resident bulls known as Ou Arrie. He became a regular night-time visitor to the boma, and soon developed an aromatic dung pile close to Shibula's quarters.

By October we had, under the supervision of the new and present park warden, Mr Nico van der Walt, succeeded in erecting a game fence inside the park which isolated Ou Arrie on one side, and the other rhino on the other side. We were now ready for the next step in Shibula's transition from a zoo curiosity to a wild, breeding black rhinoceros. This was the release of Shibula into the section of the park

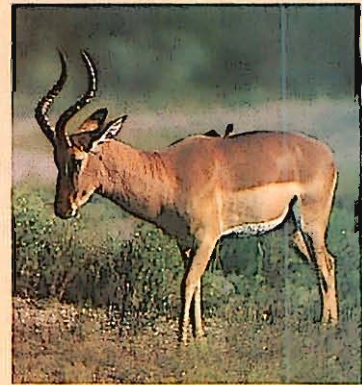
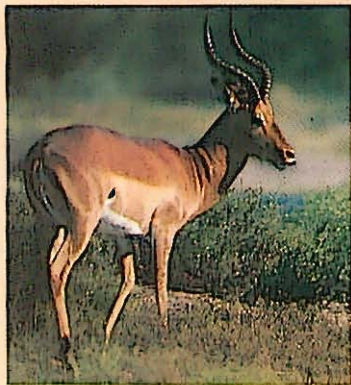
where Ou Arrie was the only resident rhino. Experience in other areas had shown that resident cows were more likely to fight with, and kill, a newcomer female, than were bulls. Our strategy was to avoid a dangerous conflict between Shibula and the resident cows. So, in December, once again with Lucky Mavrandonis and Sue Downie of Lagamed as part of the team, we released Shibula into Ou Arrie's territory.

For the first month after her release, the Augrabies game scouts had to track Shibula every day and actually see her to monitor her condition. They also read the spoor of the first meeting between Arrie and Shibula. These showed that there must have been a great deal of excitement. Shibula also ended up with a cut face and a bloody shoulder — fairly normal signs of rhino affection. For the next three weeks Arrie and Shibula went their separate ways. Then they spent a few nights together again and, with luck, probably mated.

The animals are now monitored once a week. Shibula has continued to improve in condition and is totally at home in the wild. Urine samples are being collected from damp soil soon after she has urinated and this, we hope, will allow pregnancy tests to be made. We are also pursuing the enlargement of Shibula and Arrie's range so as to give them more food and territory. For the moment they are still separated from the other Augrabies rhino by a fence. In time, when Shibula is well settled, the fence will be removed. We are then hoping that when Shibula meets Blompot and Plooitjies across a formerly respected boundary, there will be minimal fighting and a dignified retreat to the respective territories on either side of the fence line. Once we achieve a peaceful integration of Shibula into the population, we will be able to say "Shibula is home".

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Welcome home, Shibula!

Dr Anthony Hall-Martin

The young black rhinoceros cow, Shibula, the 'wild lady' of the Lisbon Zoo, is now safely at home in the Augrabies Falls National Park. After a two-week journey by road, sea and air, recorded by the television programme 50/50, she arrived at Augrabies on 17 August 1991. Her translocation to South Africa was generously sponsored by Lagamed Pharmaceuticals who, together with the David Shepherd Conservation Foundation, raised R250 000 for black rhino conservation. (Lagamed has over the past few years already raised close to one million rand for conservation projects.)

South Africans were delighted to see the entire story of her move from Lisbon by sea to Cape Town, then by a South African Air Force Hercules C130 to Upington and finally by road on her 120 kilometre journey to the Augrabies Falls National Park. The programme ended with Shibula safe and relaxed in the holding pen or boma at Augrabies. But that is not where the story began or ended.

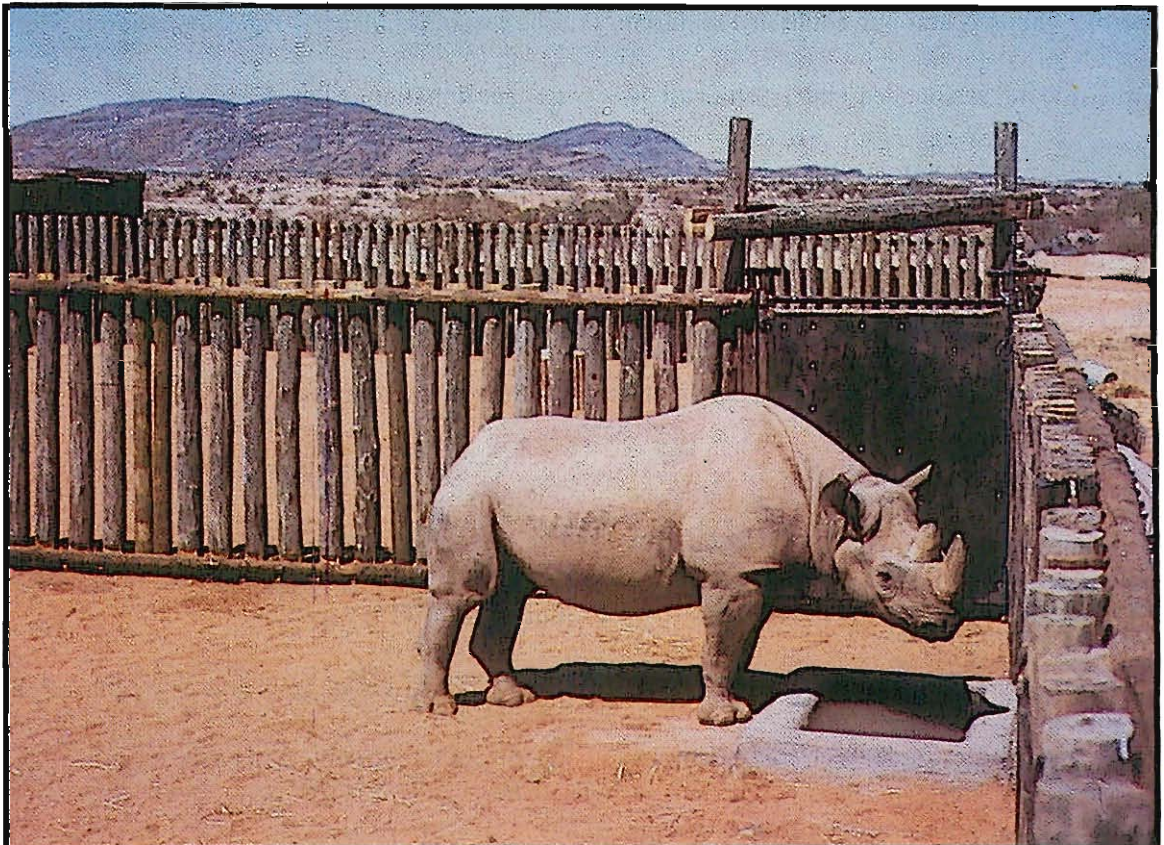
Shibula is a black rhino cow of the Cape subspecies *Diceros bicornis bicornis*. She was born in the Etosha National Park, and when she was about five years old, in early 1990, she was translocated to the Lisbon Zoo as a mate for the solitary black rhino bull at that institution. The bull was the offspring of black rhino from the Cunene region of Angola that had been kept in the zoo. These Angolan animals, from just across the border of Namibia, were also thought to be a *D. b. bicornis* population. Unfortunately the bull died soon after Shibula arrived in Lisbon. The Director of the Zoo, Dr Felix Pires, who is originally from Mozambique, then approached South Africa

for help. An assessment of the situation resulted in a deal in which Shibula was to be returned to Africa in exchange for a selection of animals from the National Parks Board, which would be transferred to the Lisbon Zoo.

The black rhinos at Augrabies, which also belong to the Cape subspecies, were translocated from Etosha in 1985 in another exchange deal involving buffalo from the Addo Elephant National Park (*Custos* 14:9). Originally a group of six rhinos, consisting of three bulls and three cows, were introduced. One of the cows was tragically killed when she fell into the Augrabies gorge and broke her neck. The remaining two cows, known as Blompot and Plootjies, settled down.

In October 1987 the first calf, Blommetjie, was born to Blompot, followed by her second calf, Catherina, in October 1989. By mid-1990 Plootjies had not yet produced a calf, and it was thought that, for genetic reasons, it would be necessary to acquire another cow to enlarge the founder population. It was decided to acquire Shibula. Before she arrived, however, on 25 April 1991, Plootjies obliged by producing a female calf called Pop. Shibula now became a bonus, but of course only if she also adds to the gene pool of Augrabies black rhino.

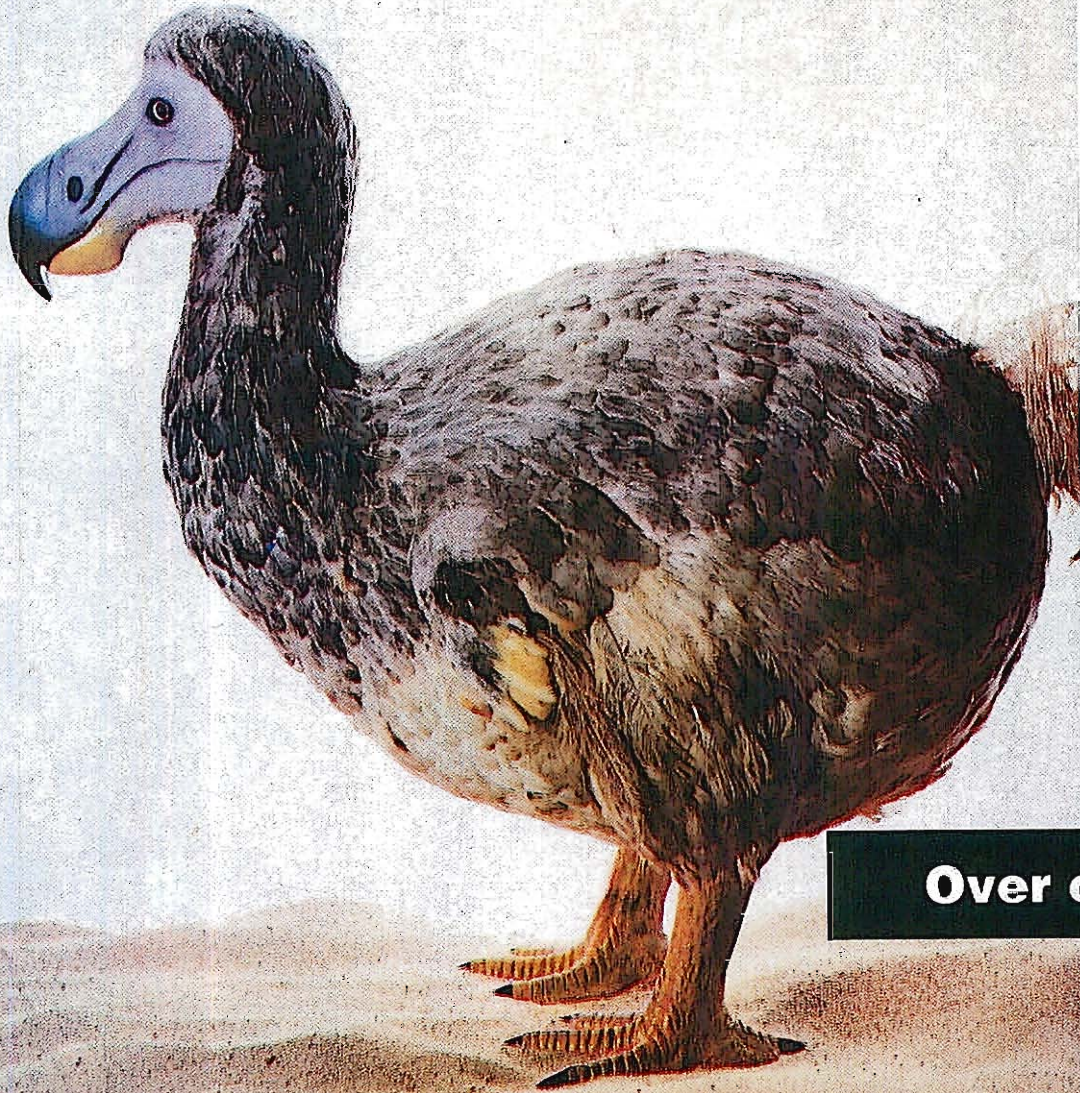
The history of black rhino translocations in southern Africa has been characterised by numerous mortalities, with more than 50 deaths from various causes over the past 30 years. Apart from boma deaths, many were attributed to fighting between newly released animals and those already occupying an area. We were determined, therefore, that Shibula would not be exposed to any unnecessary risk.



Above: Shibula, the 'wild lady' of the Lisbon Zoo, in the boma at the Augrabies Falls National Park after her successful translocation. • Bo: Shibula, die 'wilde dame' van die Lissabonse dieretuin in die boma in die Augrabies-waterval Nasionale Park na haar reis uit Portugal. Photo/Foto: Dr Anthony Hall-Martin.

Dodo (dò'dò), 1628 Raphus (Didus Cucullatus) Didus ineptus of the order Columbidae, formerly inhabiting Mauritius

Dodo model courtesy of Natal Museum



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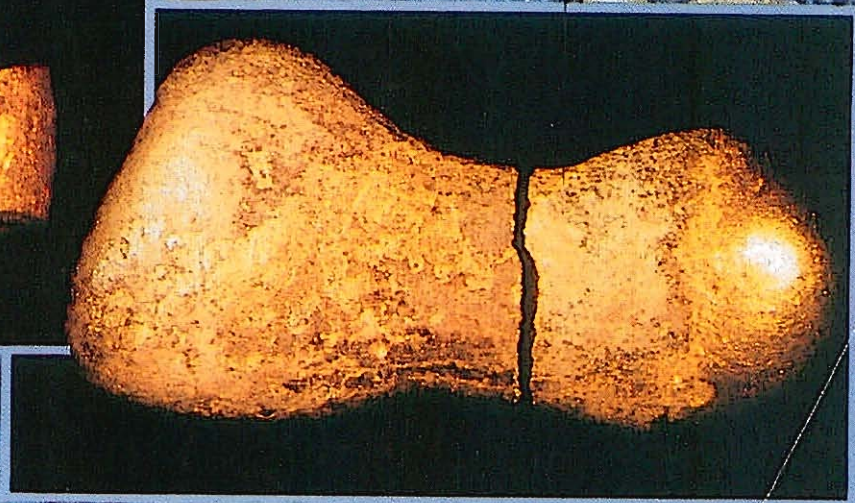
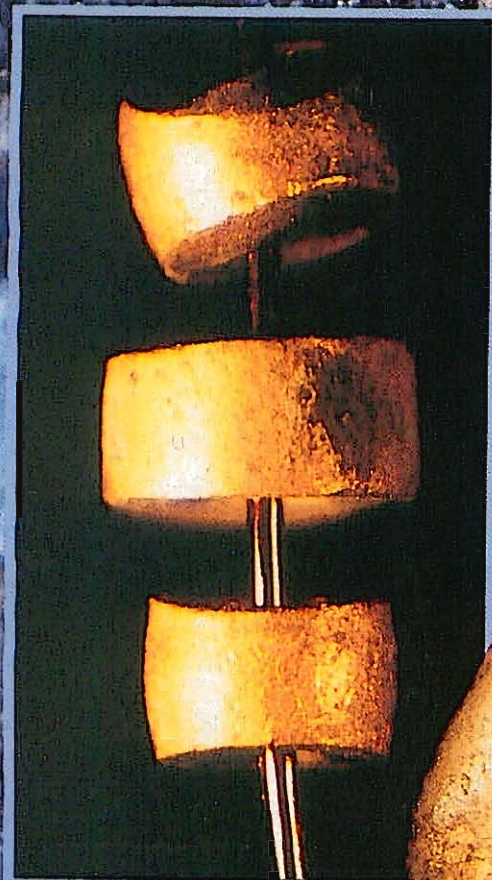
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