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Dundi and help
save the rhino in the
wild. See page 25
for more details.

SASHA

a survivor's story

by Lucky Mavrandonis and Sue Downie



Sasha has an amazing story which began when she was moved from Namibia to South Africa in March 2003 with two other black rhinos, a young sub-adult female and a bull.

After a couple of weeks in holding bomas, which allowed the rhinos to adapt to different conditions and browse, Sasha surprised everyone by giving birth to a tiny female calf. Unfortunately Sasha and her calf were separated during the cold night and there was concern that the calf would be rejected. The calf, named Thandi, was flown by helicopter to a rehabilitation facility. Sadly mother and baby were never reunited.

Sasha and the other two rhinos were moved to a small 400 ha. enclosure and got on with their lives in a new home. Two years later the three rhinos were moved to a larger area and, while she was immobilised, a transmitter for tracking her was implanted into her horn. Luckily the exercise was complete when she unexpectedly

woke up, scattering about twenty people and it took another thirty minutes to recapture her. Sue got it all on video and at no time was any person, vehicle or the helicopter hurt or damaged!

Three months later Sasha gave birth to her second calf, another female we called Nonny, which is an abbreviation for a word meaning 'lucky'. She was lucky for several reasons; lucky to be born safely after her mum received three doses of immobilising drug, lucky that she could roam free and stay with her mother; and we were lucky because she was a female.

Sasha and Nonny met the resident rhino, adapted to the new area and they have been able to be wild rhinos again with minimal interference from people.

Today, more than nine years since arriving in South Africa, Sasha has had five calves, three females and two males, and Thandi (sent to the

rehabilitation centre at one day old) is now living in the wild and made Sasha a grandmother when she gave birth to a calf in October 2010. This is another remarkable story on its own, making all Sasha's traumas worth the effort.

We wanted to share Sasha's story with you because, even though you may never see a black rhino in the wild and they may have no meaning or relevance in your day-to-day life, these magnificent ancient vegetarians deserve a life on this planet. Rhino horns don't belong on a wall or in a misguided pharmacy. They belong on a healthy rhino living in its natural habitat.

Please continue to help us save Sasha and all her kind.

Our sincere thanks to DSWF and all its supporters for your contribution to help all endangered wildlife, including these precious rhinos.

Rhino Update 2012 ...

2012 has been another horrendous year for the rhino. As Wildlife Matters went to press there were reports that 381 rhinos had been killed in South Africa since January - 100 in less than two months. The current rate of slaughter is likely to mean that the final tally this year will pass 2011's 448 animals.

The devastating escalation in poaching is blamed on increasing black market demand for rhino horn where it is worth more than its weight in gold with some sources quoting figures as high as £41,000 per kilo. While many heightened security measures have failed to stop the criminal syndicates that officials say are responsible for the killing, DSWFs monitoring and security measures continue to keep the rhinos in our projects safe, with no reported losses to date.

"The situation is dire and it is almost impossible to put into words how angry this futile waste of life makes us," says DSWF's Melanie Shepherd. "That people continue to believe in the curative powers of a substance that is made of keratin (the same material that makes our own hair and finger nails) is preposterous and we will continue to work hard to change attitudes and save the rhino."

The DSWF supported rhino projects continue to provide excellent protection for the animals in their care. PLEASE continue to support us in this desperate fight for rhino survival.