

# NEWS

SEBAKWE

SEPTEMBER 2000

Reg Charity No. 328461

Editor: John Gripper

## THE MIDLANDS INVADED

The year 2000 has been a very traumatic and stressful year for all farmers in Zimbabwe. The farmers in the Midlands Conservancy have had to face up to illegal invasions by war veterans, squatters and other intruders, who have intimidated the farmers and their farmworkers. Death threats have been made and prior to the Election some of the farmers were forced to leave their homesteads.

On the first day of my recent visit, I met Resident Minister, Cephass Msipa, the Governor of the Midlands Province and Daniel Mackenzie Ncube the local Member of Parliament for the Zhombe area, who had been invited by the farmers to tour some of the ranches in the Midlands and to see for themselves the damage that was being done to the farms.

Later in the week I was able to meet the Governor in Gweru and the local Member of Parliament in Harare, to express my concern about the increased danger of poaching of the rhino because of the loss of law and order in the farming area of the Midlands. They were both sympathetic to my concerns and assured me that they would try to ensure that the rhino would not be harmed.



FARMERS MEET THE GOVERNOR AND THE LOCAL MP AT BEMTHREE

2226 farms have now been listed for compulsory acquisition for resettlement, without any payment of compensation for land, this is more than half the total farms in the country - and there are more to come. Once listed the farmer has 30 days to object. This has created great uncertainty amongst the farmers, the banks are not prepared to provide further loans to a farmer once he has been listed nor is he able to sell the farm. He is likely to be invaded by war veterans and have constant interference in the running of his farm, most of the hunting clients and tourists have cancelled. Some farmers have quit but the majority are staying on - hoping for better times.

In Harare I met Brigadier E.W. Kanhanga, the new acting Director of National Parks, Vitalis Chadenga, deputy director of research and Moses T Choto, deputy director of conservation and management and also Donald Mutape, the Chief Warden.

This was a very useful meeting and again I received reassurances over the future of the private conservancies and the protection of black rhino. I was told that there were no confirmed reports of any rhino being killed.

I came home confident that despite the very difficult political and economic situation in Zimbabwe, there is a resolution and determination from the farmers and the vast majority of the people, from all walks of life, to work together for a better future for their country



## RHINO MAYDAY

At Rhino Mayday, Sky Alibhai and Zoe Jewell of Rhinowatch spoke about their research findings during their work at Sinamatella Intensive Protection Zone in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe. Their remit, as defined by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, has been to help monitor the black rhino population at Sinamatella and provide data for the Department. They will be publishing a full scientific paper in the Journal of Zoology.

The first of their findings is that that frequent immobilisation of black rhino, which has been carried out routinely to fit or replace radio collars, has resulted in reduced fertility in the female black rhino by about 40% as shown by an increase of the inter calving interval between pregnancies. It is thought that the stress associated with darting can cause absorption of the foetus or abortion.

The second finding related to the unreliability of the radio collaring. 83% of the radio collars on white rhino failed within 7 months and 63% of collars placed on black rhino failed within 5 months. These results included collars that were too tight and were cutting into rhinos causing serious injuries to the neck and had to be removed, requiring another immobilisation.

These findings raised the whole question about the risks, benefits and costs of an invasive radio collaring programme for rhino and following a report of these findings in 1999, the Department of National Parks suspended all radio collaring of rhino.

Sky Alibhai has said that with so many question marks, it is not surprising that no other black rhino range state in southern Africa has employed radio collaring for routine monitoring and protection.

These findings have been challenged by the Zambezi Society who believe that collaring provides an effective means both to monitor rhinos and deter poachers. They have tried to discredit the findings of Rhinowatch on the grounds of statistical methodology and the sample size. This has now become a controversial issue and the National Rhino Management Committee formed by National Parks will be considering its future policy at its next meeting.



NECK INJURIES FROM RADIO COLLAR

### Calling all Junior Members

We are planning a Newsletter specially for our junior members, which will give you some competitions and more information. It would be great if you would write to us so we can include a 'Readers Letters' page. Maybe you have some questions to ask us or perhaps you have been taking part in an 'endangered species' project at school which you would like to share with us. I am sure some of you will have something to write about or a picture to send – so get busy please and help us make your own magazine fun to read.

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## WATCHING AS TRAGEDY UNFOLDS

The following Comment was written in the Zimbabwe Independent Newspaper on 25th August 2000:-

Remarks last weekend by a South African conservation expert paint an alarming picture of Zimbabwe's fast-track resettlement programme.

Professor Francois du Toit of Pretoria University told the BBC that the resettlement of 500,000 families, without capital, skills or implements would accelerate deforestation, poaching, and general environmental degradation and would lead to the extinction of endangered species such as the black rhino, sable and cheetah.

This assessment follows warnings by the Commercial Farmers Union and environmentalists that the Intensive Conservation Areas established across farm boundaries were rapidly falling victim to indiscriminate tree-felling and poaching.



TREE FELLING FOR RESETTLEMENT

In addition to feeding the nation the commercial farming sector has over the years played a significant role in conservation of woodlands, game and river systems. These are now at risk.

The most worrying developments however are currently taking place in the country's Lowveld conservancies. Here is a network of interlocking ranches from the Save Valley Conservancy, a 340,000-hectare habitat for otherwise threatened species such as the African Hunting dog and the black rhino relocated from the Zambezi valley in the mid-1990's.

Conservancy officials say black rhino have been poached by farm invaders mobilised by war veterans. Fences have been torn down, game guards seized, and veld set alight to capture game. Ranchers are unable to patrol their land and cannot therefore monitor wildlife movements.

The Save Conservancy is a post-independence success story and the product of private-sector initiative. It is a huge tourist drawcard at the upper end of the market and has spin offs for the local communities. Zimbabwe's efforts in relocating and thereby conserving the threatened black rhino have deservedly been trumpeted around the world.

All that is now at risk. The CFU reports police are standing by watching the tragedy unfold. They can do nothing given political orders not to intervene, they say.

As manufacturing declined in the late 1990's tourism was held up as the nations saviour. Whatever happened in other sectors, we would still have this modern dynamic sector to support us with its lucrative forex revenues, we were told.





PIERRE FAVIER & GUARDS

## CONSERVATOR

For the last five years Pierre Favier has been the part time Conservator at the Conservancy. He has had overall responsibility for the rhino guards, monitors and the preparation of budgets and keeping of accounts.

At the same time he has been running his ostrich farm with the help of his wife. They have now decided to move on and we wish them well in their new venture and thank them for the invaluable work and help which they have given to the Conservancy.

We welcome Ferdie Terblanche who has been appointed the new part time Conservator. He has trained in conservation and has experience of working in South Africa and Zimbabwe. He and his wife will be living at Dunlop Ranch.

## FRIENDS OF KWE KWE

The town of Peterborough in the U.K. is twinned with Kwe Kwe. Your editor was asked by the Friends of Kwe Kwe to take some much needed medical supplies for the local clinics in Kwe Kwe and present them to the Mr Johnson Mawebe, the Mayor. He was delighted and very grateful to receive them.



MAYOR OF KWE KWE & JOHN GRIPPER



PAPRIKA DRYING IN THE SUN

## PAPRIKA

This is a new crop, which is becoming more popular in the Midlands area where it grows well. It is sown as an alternative cash crop to tobacco. Most of the paprika crop is exported to India, where the spice is used in cooking for its mildly pungent flavour and for its red colour.

## SEBAKWE BLACK RHINO TRUST ACCOUNTS

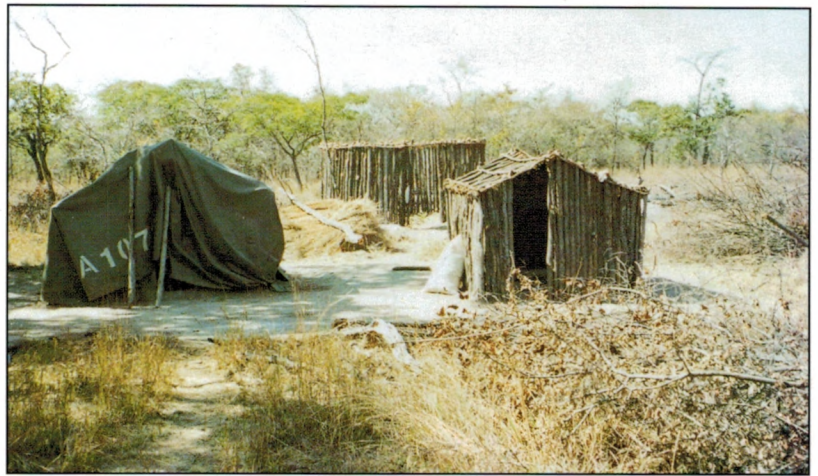
<u>INCOME</u>	1998	1999
Profit from sale of goods	553	48
Donations and Covenants	17935	13393
Membership & Subs	1119	979
Adopt a rhino scheme	1363	1075
Income Tax Refund	343	318
Dividends & Interest	7668	8226
Quiz	211	307
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29192</b>	<b>24346</b>

## EXPENDITURE

Printing & Postage	887	590
Advertising	764	495
Travel	1137	715
Miscellaneous	420	215
Donations	157	400
Transfer to Zimbabwe	5182	10103
Transfer to Reserve	16000	8000
Income over Expenditure	4645	3828
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29192</b>	<b>24346</b>



That is history now. Hotel occupancies across the country are down to 20% in some resorts. The forex we need to pay for fuel and electricity imports have evaporated as first tobacco and now tourism succumb to the low-intensity civil war President Mugabe and his supporters have unleashed on the land.



ILLEGAL SQUATTER HUTS

In the Lowveld the removal of game fences means diseases such as foot-and-mouth will recur with attendant losses to the beef export market, particularly the European Union.

This is the price the country pays for politically inspired lawlessness. It is no good Mugabe denying in Maputo that the rule of law has collapsed while claiming that war veterans are “merely trespassing”. The truth is evident all round us.

Despite high profile action against the war veterans on farms surrounding Harare nothing is being done to prevent the lawlessness on farms across the country which have seen systematic poaching and commercial tree-cutting in addition to cattle slaughter and destruction of property.

Professor Du Toit is stating the obvious when he says people resettled without investment, training or implements are likely to cause extensive damage. Furthermore this reckless approach to land reform is being carried out by selection committees that are almost entirely made up of war veterans and local Zanu PF supporters while those displaced are perceived as MDC supporters who deserve to be punished for exercising their political rights. Senior government officials have in fact told them that.

It is estimated 240,000 farm workers will be evicted if the government’s fast-track programme proceeds. That will create another crisis contributing to poverty and destitution.

Vice-President Msika’s response to warnings of environmental degradation has been to dismiss such reports as part of the international conspiracy which Zanu PF imagines to exist and in the same breath to say money “running into millions” will be channelled into preventing any damage.

His combination of arrogance and ignorance will be fatal to the future of the agricultural sector. This week President Mugabe slapped down John Nkomo’s attempt to place a limit on anarchy and gave another green light to war veterans to stay where they are.

In one fell swoop he thus put paid to the deliberations of regional leaders on smart partnership in Maputo this week. There is nothing smart about a regime that promotes anarchy, destroys the work of years of investment and labour of those in the agricultural and tourism sectors, watches while the environment is plundered, and rebukes the police when they do finally act against lawlessness.

There was a time when Mugabe could get away with saying one thing and do another. No more.

He is the architect of the country’s current misfortunes. And as long as he remains at the helm things are only likely to get worse. At least a majority of Zimbabweans have woken up to that reality now. So will the purported beneficiaries of his land blitz when they realise they have been left to inherit a desert.

(The views expressed in this newspaper article are not necessarily shared by the Editor of this Newsletter or the SBRT trustees)



## Annie's Page

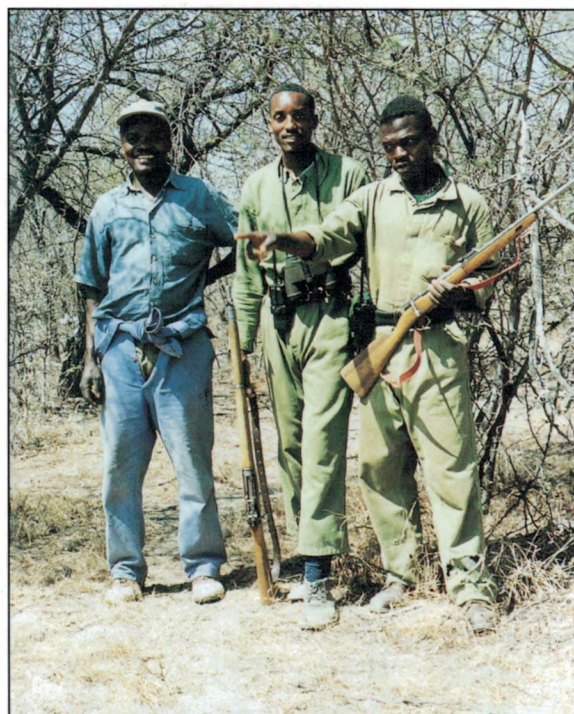
### Charity Lunch

Twice a year Michael and Tricia Samuel give a charity lunch at their home in Woking. This August, the lunch was held on behalf of the Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust. It was a beautiful sunny day and Tricia had prepared a tremendous buffet lunch. We also had a raffle and at the end of the day Michael donated the sum of £1026.00 to our Trust. We will be able to claim back the new 28% tax refund on this donation so it was all very worthwhile. Thank you Michael and Tricia, we appreciate your support.

### Africa Xtreme

Paul Mullins is from the Bulawayo area of Zimbabwe and he has started a business here in Southampton. He imports and sells African carvings and artefacts to different retail outlets in the U.K. His company is called Africa Xtreme and they are supporters of the Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust. Following a visit to the Midlands Conservancy, they have donated Zim \$60,000 (£1000.00) to the Trust and also adopted seven of our rhino.

We are very grateful to Paul and his associates. The money will be used towards the replacement of uniforms and equipment for the guards and also for updating the two way radio sets, so that all the farmers can keep in contact with each other and the main base at all times. This ensures that poachers and other intruders can be detected as soon as they enter the conservancy and security is maintained in these unsettled times.



BEMTHREE TRACKER AND GUARDS

### Tapiwa

We were all surprised when Tapiwa on Bemthree had another calf during May 2000. She is only nine years old and had Tafari, her first calf in May 1998, just two years previously. We are pretty sure that the father is again Tangarira, who although 32 years old, successfully fought off a male black rhino who was trying to muscle in on his territory. The family of four are all well and Tafari stays within the family group along with the new calf. We do not yet know the sex of the new calf but the proposed name of Tatenda means 'thank you' in Shona so is suitable for either sex anyway.



TANGARIRA



TAPIWA, TAFARAI & CALF