

AFRICA BY CHRIS BOBKO

When the wheels of the airplane set down in Nairobi, Kenya at 4:30 in the morning, the excitement and pure joy I felt was incredible. To finally see Africa, which had only been a dream, was an emotional moment for me.

My trip to the "land of enchantment" started with Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary, and meeting my personal hero, Anna Merz, the founder of this remarkable place. We were picked up by Ian Craig who works closely with Anna in the operation of the sanctuary, and is one of two sons of Dehlia and David Craig, the owners of Lewa Downs in which Ngare Sergoi is located. Our mode of transportation was a VERY small four-seater plane in which we were lifted up and into the African sky, and as we took off we went out over Nairobi National Park where we caught our first glimpse of African wildlife on the plains below. During the flight, it was obvious that the land was heavily farmed, plot after plot of crops for as far as the eye could see. Before touching down in Lewa we flew over Mount Kenya with its abundant forests and snow-capped peak. As we landed, I saw my first wild rhinos, which were peacefully grazing on the grasses below.

Our two weeks at the sanctuary were divided between several different areas of Lewa giving us a great opportunity to see how each part of the sanc-

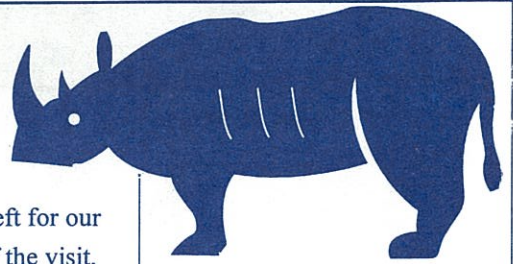
tuary functions. Ngare Sergoi is part of what is called Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Lewa has its own tourist lodge called "Wilderness Trails" which is unique from other lodges in the national parks because you can take hikes, horseback rides, as well as the standard four-wheel drive tours. This beautiful lodge is run by William and Emma Craig, and was a very enjoyable part of our stay at Lewa. We were fortunate enough to spend time with each of the Craigs, and learn about each of their roles in the operation of the sanctuary.

Finally, I was able to meet Anna Merz, and spend seven glorious days in RHINO HEAVEN!!!! Our days would start with a drive in the morning, tracking the rhinos from the truck, and then getting closer to the rhinos on foot. On several occasions I was no more than 20 yards away from wild rhinos...AWESOME! Anna records the location of each rhino every day in her log book as the trackers call in on the radio from around the sanctuary. Anna usually takes one tracker with her each morning, and normally it was a man named Daniel. Tracking is a full time job that requires men that have excellent bush skills and dedication to the rhinos. Over 160 men are employed at Lewa for tracking and anti-poaching patrol, all of which are extremely good at their job, and are a valuable asset to the sanctuary.

"Samia", Anna's hand-raised rhino, would visit us every day, usually in the morning before we left for our drive. At the time of the visit, "Samia" was pregnant and Anna a little tense over the impending birth. We were informed recently that "Samia" had given birth to a healthy baby boy!!!! Anna would have to lure "Samia" away before we could get into the truck with alfalfa pellet treats, and I must say this was quite a sight - A full grown rhino being led away like a big puppy dog! The house has barricades around it due to "Samia" not quite realizing that she can no longer join the rest of the household as she used to.

Our evenings were spent on lovely walks with Anna and her five dogs, which on more than one occasion scared up jackals and birds. We always looked forward to these walks because of the cool evening air and the peace that descended over the land at that time of day. To walk among herds of Grevy's zebra, impala, and giraffe was one of many incredible moments that shall not be forgotten.

One of the most special moments for me came when it was time to put "Lij" and "Rhinestone's" ashes to rest. I had carried them all the way to Africa, and now it was time to say my final good-byes to two animals that I loved dearly. I could not have asked for a more beautiful and peaceful place to



let them go than where Anna took me on that very special night. Anna buried her beloved dog "Sambo", and scattered her late husband Karl's ashes overlooking a magnificent valley where every day glorious sunsets graced their grave. It was here she took me to release my beloved rhinos to the land and spirit of Africa, and as we left, a black rhino with her young calf came to the road and I knew that "Lij" and "Rhinestone" were finally home.

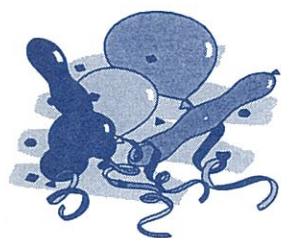
My two weeks at Ngare Sergoi was the most incredible experience of my lifetime. This sanctuary is the benchmark for all future private sanctuaries to follow. The money that is raised for "Bowling for Rhinos" is not only saving the rhino, but is educating countless people that come to Lewa for safaris as well as the people that Lewa employs. The plenitude of wildlife on this sanctuary is breathtaking, and is full proof that commitment and dedication to conservation can be combined with revenue. I learned more about rhinos in two weeks than I thought possible, and will be restless until my next visit to this most incredible county. Africa is all that I thought it would be and more. It also can take your heart and soul away.... It has mine.

Newsletter for the
staff of the Denver
Zoo

May/June 1995

Comments about the
new format?
Call x5801

Pronghorn



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!

May/June Birthdays

Mandell Baldwin
Gil Bueno
Barb Cavender
Henry Chandler
Sarah Christian
Oliver Davis
Doug Fletcher
Tobias Jantz
Vickie Kunter
Sheila Lindquist
Paul Lyvere
Mark Marciniak
Albert Martinez
Heather McClure
Cynthia McKellips
Gerald Mota
Ralph Nagler
Dave Parman
Archie Paulson
Deb Perego
Janis Pfohl
Dennis Roling
Randall Stubbs
Martha Turnbull

From The Director's Desk

As I am sure everyone has noticed, the combination of sunny, mild winter weather coupled with the extraordinary media attention focused on our raising of the polar bear cubs Klondike and Snow, zoo attendance and resultant revenues from admissions and concessions are literally "off the charts."

March was an absolute all-time record month in the zoo's history wherein we recorded 238,677 visitors (+43% compared to 1993) and earned \$595,708 (+55% compared to last year) in admission revenues. Year-to-date, the first quarter of 1995 shows 470,359 visitors, a 118,727 (34%) increase over 1994's record year. Admission income for the same period was \$1,138,819.99, a 44% increase of \$347,241 for the year.

K-M Concessions also experienced record revenues in March, with \$753,649.15 in total sales, a 113% (+\$399,744.74) increase compared to 1994. This resulted in our receiving the largest rent check in history from K-M - \$172,440.44, a 109% increase over the \$82,399.48 earned for the same period last year. Not surprisingly,

huge increases in polar-bear related merchandise were noted.

This is all extremely gratifying inasmuch as we were somewhat concerned about maintaining the zoo's economy following our record year in 1994. We were hoping that the newly relocated miniature train and the new free flight bird show would help maintain our market share but "polar bear mania" was totally unforeseen. This phenomena has placed considerable stress on all zoo departments and I would like to express my appreciation for everyone's patience and good nature as we've attempted to cope with the unprecedented early crowds.

I also am very pleased to inform you that our vision for a fine, modern education facility at the Denver Zoo appears to be becoming reality. On 6 April the Board of Trustees of the Gates Foundation, long-standing friends of the zoo, approved a \$1,000,000 grant to the Denver Zoological Foundation to build and equip the Gates Wildlife Conservation Education Center. Also the board of the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) trust fund approved a \$500,000

grant to the center at their meeting on 13 April. Now that Colorado legislature has completed action on the state budget, we expect an additional \$500,000 to flow from the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW). We have been working on the development of this unique partnership between the zoo, GOCO and DOW to establish an urban wildlife education center for approximately the last 18 months and I am delighted that our efforts are now bearing fruit. In 1994, GOCO and DOW approved a \$100,000 design grant for the center and our architects for the project, Barker, Rinker, Seacat & Partners of Denver, have been working on a design scheme for the past several months. Schematic design is virtually complete and design development will occur this summer. If we can raise an additional \$500,000 (the center is estimated to cost \$2.5 million) we are hopeful that construction might begin this fall and that it could be completed by late-summer of 1996, the zoo's centennial year. More later - stay tuned!

Clayton F. Freiheit
Zoo Director