

TOUCAN TALK

A TRIP TO THE ZOO THAT COMES TO YOU!



WILD FLORIDA

LOOKING BACK
TO SEE THE FUTURE

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FEAST WITH THE BEASTS '96

FUN WITH LASTING IMPACT

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BLACK RHINOS SAVING THEM FROM EXTINCTION

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Katrina Osborn, one of the giraffe's area keepers, was the proud winner of a two-week trip to the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya. Katrina won first prize for collecting the most pledges in the United States and Canada through Bowling for Rhinos, an annual bowling tournament organized by the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK). (See Calendar of Events for upcoming tournament.) This tournament is part of an effort to provide needed funds to protect the endangered black rhino. After her return from Kenya, Katrina talked to Toucan Talk about her wonderful experiences.

TOUCAN TALK: What exactly is the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and how did it start?

KATRINA OSBORN: Anna Merz, rightfully called the "Rhino Lady," started the reserve. In 1982, Anna went to visit Lewa Downs, property of a British family, the Craigs. She fell in love with the black rhinos and decided to help. She proposed to the Craigs that, if they lent her the land, she would provide the funds to create a rhino sanctuary. They agreed, she sold all her possessions and started by fencing a 5,000-acre portion of land which later became 10,000 acres. Today, there are 55,000 acres fenced to protect a wide variety of animals.

TT: How do they watch this wide area?

KO: They enforce the protection with a security staff of 75. They also fly a plane, donated by AAZK, looking for breaks in the fence or for any kind of poaching. It's been so successful that no animals have died in the hands of poachers! That is why they're the role models for the rest of Africa. They're even looking to possibly expand protected boundaries all the way to Ethiopia so the rhinos can have a natural migration route.

TT: What was so special about this reserve, besides the obvious reason of serving as a sanctuary for black rhinos?

KO: Anna has always been ahead of her time. She set the example for the rest of Africa by working with local farmers such as the Craigs and showing them that tourism could be a very profitable industry.

TT: How does the Conservancy help local communities?

KO: They provide jobs to at least 100 people who work in places such as the tourist lodges, or building the school or the hospital. This is in addition to the approximately 150 working directly for the reserve.

TRIP TO THE LAND OF THE RHINOS



Serene landscape in Kenya, where important efforts are made to protect the endangered black rhino. Photo: Katrina Osborn

One of the things that Anna has done, for example, is to publish a tiny book relating her experiences with Samia, a rhino she hand-raised. She then sells it to tourists for a price which allows her not only to cover her costs, but also to produce the same booklet in Masai to help educate the natives.

TT: Where did you stay?

KO: The first night I stayed at the "Wilderness," a lodge used for people who go on photo safaris. After that, I stayed with Anna Merz for 3 days, and for the rest of the trip I stayed with the Dyers, a wonderful couple who work for the Conservancy.

TT: What were your activities during the day?

KO: The first 3 days we went "rhino-watching." This meant going out with a tracker to find the rhinos and check their behavior. The rhinos are checked daily (there

are 42 rhinos!) and when Anna can't do it, the trackers call her

over the radio. She has a little notebook she carries with her to write down the observations. Imagine, she has kept track of daily rhino behaviors for each one since she came to the reserve! Anyway, going back to our activities...Other times we would go on a "game ride," looking for animals such as elephants or the "elusive kudu." Two mornings we went to the Craigs' house and walked with trackers who watched the rehabilitated cheetahs.

Other times we visited the native women to see them making rugs and the men woodwork. We also visited the school, met the head-

master, and the administrative offices of the Conservancy to learn how they operated. In the afternoon, Anna and I took walks with her dogs among secretary birds, kori bustards and zebras.

TT: How can people help the Conservancy?

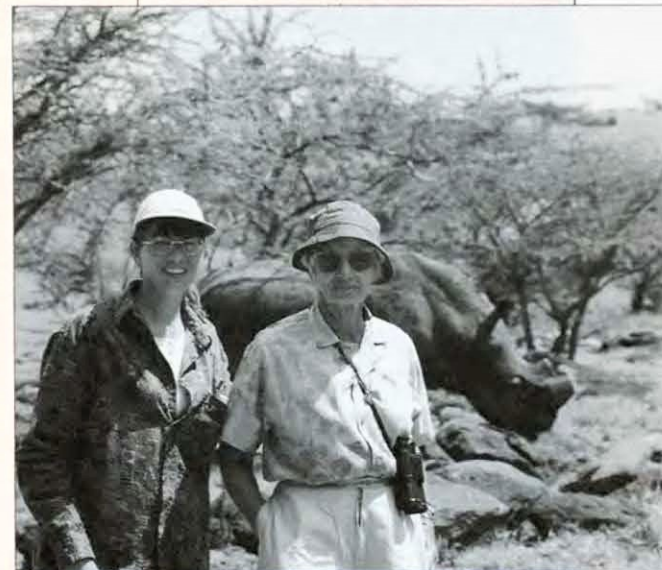
KO: Here in Florida and the United States in general people can participate in their local AAZK chapter's "Bowling for Rhinos" fund-raiser.

TT: What is your most special memory from the trip?

KO: The fact that I was able to spend time with someone as committed and passionate about a cause as Anna Merz. It was incredible to get to know someone so significant worldwide on a personal basis.

TT: Anything you would like to add?

KO: I would like to thank Metro-Dade County, Zoological Society docents and the South Florida chapter of AAZK for their wonder-



Katrina Osborn, Metrozoo keeper and winner of a trip to Kenya, in the company of Anna Merz, "The Rhino Lady."

ful support. I've never worked in a place where everybody was so supportive. Metrozoo is a very special place!

NEW BABIES

JANUARY 11 - APRIL 3



Baby gemsbok Photo: Dolora Batchelor

African spurred tortoise
20 sex unknown January 11-March 1

Demoiselle crane
2 sex unknown February 14 & 15

Wart hog
1 male/2 females February 16

Addax
1 male February 16

Eastern leopard tortoise
7 sex unknown February 18-29

Gemsbok
1 male February 20

African white-backed vulture
1 sex unknown March 2

Nile lechwe
1 male March 5

Gemsbok
1 male March 6

Baird's tapir
1 female March 21