



# SAVE FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA (INC)

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## NEWSHEET - MAY 1999

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### UPDATE

The SAVE FOUNDATION apologises for its inactivity for much of the past year and this was perhaps caused by a certain degree of complacency within the Executive of the Foundation due to favorable reports being received from the field within Zimbabwe. Fortunately, the black rhinos are not aware of the petty politics that occur within the Department of National Parks and just continued with their "business as usual". However, a closer look at the inefficiencies within the Department and the continual "political" involvement within the system shows that they have continued to muddle their way through their weekly activities. Added to this, President Mugabe is becoming increasingly more unpopular and various riots and protests have not been uncommon throughout the year. At the same time, the Zimbabwean dollar has taken a major slide compared to foreign currencies and life has become extremely unpleasant for many Zimbabweans. How some of the local people survive is beyond our comprehension.

But the good news is that the rhinos are continuing to breed and multiply with births reported from all the stronghold areas. We commend the men in the field whose duty it is to protect and monitor the rhino and that is why all of our support goes to make their life more bearable. The breeding programme at Imire Game Ranch is particularly pleasing, because after the lean time at the beginning, the rhinos really started to produce. A total of eight calves have now been born and the dominant male and female have been returned back to the wild from whence they came eleven years ago. They are now becoming "wild rhinos" in Matusadona National Park and that is where their offspring are also being taken. Any visitors to Zimbabwe should make a point of visiting the area and please contact our office for any details you may require.

Of particular significance in the rhino rehabilitation programme is the releasing of Chewore in to Matusadona. You may recall in the previous newsletters

that Chewore was rescued from Chewore Safari Area some four years ago and taken to Tashinga, with her injured mother, to be raised by hand until ready for release. This time has now come and she has been back in to the wild for about a year and has been seen to be mating and hopefully she is pregnant. In the meantime, her mother has produced another calf and that is also part of the rehabilitation programme, together with the calves from Imire. It is pleasing to see these good results and makes the work of the SAVE FOUNDATION so much more meaningful.

However, the downside has been that for eighteen months the Directorate of National Parks has been incapable of making a decision for an "official" programme to be set up at Tashinga. We have offered financial support, together with the Government veterinarian, but no one seems to be prepared to sign on the dotted line to give it the stamp of approval. So, the project muddles on regardless!

Matopos National Park has long been the stronghold of white rhinos in Zimbabwe. As you may know, the white rhino is a native of South Africa and is named after the Afrikaans word wit, meaning wide, but mistakenly translated as white by the early English settlers. The white rhino has a wide mouth and its name has nothing to do with its colour. In fact, both the white and the black rhino are a dark grey and the white rhino grows to 2,500 kgs and the black to 1,500 kgs. The whites live in small family units and are grazers and the blacks are mainly solitary and are browsers. The white rhino population in Matopos has grown beyond its capacity and infighting has occurred with some of the dominant males, resulting in a couple of deaths. In the last week, Andy Searle, who many of you have met, has captured about a dozen white rhino and a small family unit is being relocated to Main Camp in Hwange and another group is going to the floodplain in Sinamatella, also in Hwange.

## **DONATIONS**

**D**uring the past year we have spent about \$27,000 on various items vital for field work to continue at a reasonable degree of efficiency. This includes: rhino tracking collars (\$14,100); field equipment (\$3,600); vehicle spare parts (\$3,000); wild dog project (\$2,700); Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund (\$1,500); Hwange water supply (\$1,100) and leopard research project (\$1,000)

We are also in the process of supplying some more batteries for the field radios and these will be purchased from funds held in the David Gower Black Rhino Fund in Harare, proceeds from previous celebrity cricket matches.

## **ANDY SEARLE'S VISIT**

**D**uring the month of February, Andy Searle and his wife Loretta, made a month's visit to all the capital cities of Australia. Andy had worked for 20 years within National Parks and is currently the Warden in charge of the Capture Unit, and thus has been highly involved in elephant and rhino translocation, not to mention wild dog, lions and many other species. Each State hosted Andy and Lol and arranged for a fund raising evening to be held. Andy's presentation was both stimulating and provocative and caused many of the audience to rethink their stance on elephant management. It must be difficult for outsiders to fully comprehend the problems of such a large mammal, capable of eating 150 kgs of vegetation each day as well as drinking some 90 litres of water. Where can all this come from, considering there are 70,000 elephants in Zimbabwe, and how can these daily intakes be sustained?

The presentation nights were well attended in all States and a total of \$4,720 was raised around Australia. Congratulations to everyone who was involved in the project and thanks very much for a job well done. The money is now being used to purchase a modern helicopter helmet for Andy together with noise attenuation equipment, as well as some night vision binoculars and a number of radio collars for the rhino translocation project.

Andy is also involved with one of our New South Wales colleagues, Julia Salnicki, in some carnivore research in Hwange, so any of our members who visit that part of the world are most welcome to contact our office to see how they may track lion, leopard and cheetah! And it's in the same area as Greg Rassmussen with all those wild dogs!

## **RAFFLE**

**W**e have taken the liberty of enclosing a book of raffle tickets, 20 @ \$2 each, with the winner receiving a fabulous 7 day safari to Zimbabwe. This has been made possible with the kind support of Adventure World, Landela Safaris, Zimbabwe Express Airlines,

Painted Hunting Dog Research Team, Tucker-Seabrook and Amarula Cream.

Please will you endeavour to sell these 20 tickets, which shouldn't be too difficult, and return them to the Perth office by 30 June, 1999. However, if you feel that it was presumptuous of us to send them to you then will you kindly return them in the very near future so that they can be assigned to some other means of sale. We hope you understand our point of view and can make every effort to support this campaign. If the tickets are completely sold around Australia, the result will be an income of some \$20,000 and naturally this will be used for projects within Zimbabwe.

## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS**

**I**t's that time of year again and we enclose with this newsheet your renewal invoice for the 1999 / 2000 year. This is not a major income - producer for the Foundation, but it is important that we do have a viable membership and hence we ask you continue to support the SAVE FOUNDATION. Any additional donation that you care to make is tax deductible and a separate receipt will be issued.

**Y**our Executive looks forward to bringing you more news in the near future and to providing at least one major fundraising dinner within the next few months. We are keen to bring Tony Bullimore to Australia and are trying to organise some other commercial speaking engagements for him, in order to make the visit more worthwhile.

Thank you for being patient in 1999 and we can assure you that we will continue to maintain our good work and good reputation in Zimbabwe. There are many rhinos alive only because of the contribution made by you and the SAVE FOUNDATION.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING / FILM NIGHT**

Notice is hereby given that the Twelfth Annual General Meeting of the SAVE FOUNDATION of Australia (Inc) will be held on Tuesday 8 June, at 7.30pm at the Education Centre of the Perth Zoo. The agenda will be as follows:.

*Business:*

1. Acceptance of the minutes from the Eleventh Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 25 June, 1998.
2. President's Report.
3. Treasurer's Report.
4. Election of Executive Committee.
5. Any other business.

Nomination forms for positions on the Executive, together with proxy forms, are available from the SAVE FOUNDATION in Perth and nominations should be lodged at that office by 7.30pm on Thursday 3 June.

**Film: "The Magic of Africa"**

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