



SAVE FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA (INC)

Patrons:-

The Lord McAlpine of West Green

David Gower OBE

Bryce Courtenay AM

Nick Price

229 Oxford St, Leederville, Western Australia, 6007

Telephone: (08) 9444 1545, (08) 9444 6550, Facsimile: (08) 9444 9270

Email: save@iinet.net.au

Web site: <http://www.iinet.net.au/~save>

NEWSHEET - MARCH 2002

Volume 13, No 2

Branches - NSW 02 9997 1828

SA 08 8339 6843

VIC 03 9482 1604

ZIMBABWE UPDATE

As the eyes of the world focus on this weekend's Presidential Election in Zimbabwe, let us hope that it is peaceful and democratic and that the Zimbabwe people can freely and fairly make their choice. Since January this year there have been 31 political deaths whilst a few other people are missing without trace. This brings the death toll to well over a 100 since trouble started some 2 years ago.

Fortunately, the black rhinos have steered clear of politics and continue to breed in both the National Parks and private conservancies. Of the latter, Bubiana has suffered the most casualties with the loss of more than 30,000 small antelope and 3 rhinos. Snaring is rampant throughout the country, taking heavy toll of the smaller creatures and causing permanent injury to those that manage to escape from the wire nooses.

Last November we purchased five rhino horn implants to be fitted to large bulls who are becoming adept at slipping out of their radio transmitter collars. We also funded the repair of six of these rhino collars. The whole of the rhino conservation community should be greatly indebted to the wonderful work being done by Dr Chris Foggin. He is the chief national wildlife veterinarian and his responsibilities extend right around the country and across the whole wildlife spectrum. In other words, he is a very busy and important man. He is the only vet who is qualified to work on rhinos and hence he has to make himself available to travel to all nine different rhino locations within Zimbabwe. He does this in his own time and sometimes at his own expense and the SAVE FOUNDATION wishes to support him more in the future. We witnessed a recent example of his dedication when visiting Bob Swift's farm in the Midlands in January, when he treated an injured female.

We recently purchased some swag covers for Greg Rasmussen's wild dog project in Hwange. These are made of a very superior quality material in

Perth and are used by his patrols when overnighting in the bush.

Our good friend Julia Salnicki, formerly with our NSW branch, has for the last three years been researching the habits of the hyeana in Hwange National Park. We continue to give her financial support to encourage her with her activities in her lonely existence. One of her followers, Margaret Scown from Adelaide, in conjunction with her kindergarten children, raised enough money to supply Julia with a big box of books, pens and crayons for the Main Camp school, where Julia teaches environmental studies. Thanks Margaret and the kids for this great effort and your books were safely delivered to Julia in January.

If any of our readers would like a copy of Julia's *Hyeana Herald*, then please email our office and we can forward it to you.

VOLUNTEER WANTED

For the past 14 years I have enjoyed free and easy access to secretarial services. This has been vital as I am computer illiterate. Now that I have retired from my business, it will become increasingly more difficult for me to attend to the amount of communication that we receive on a fairly regular basis. In addition, we hope to conduct some safaris later in the year and are also planning on a major international cricket event in Perth in late November.

Accordingly, I am requesting some voluntary help from anyone living within easy reach of our Leederville premises, who is competent in word processing, email and database. There is a definite need for some secretarial support, please, preferably after 5pm if we are to use the office computer.

So, please give me a call on 9444 6550 and I can let you know more about our requirements. Thank you.

January fact-finding visit

From 5 - 15 January, I was joined by Stephen Mills, a freelance journalist from Oxford, Bill Ryan, semi-retired businessman from Perth and his sister, Patricia Nash, from Sydney. We were all under the excellent care of Zimbabwe's former chief warden, Glenn Tatham, and his wife Rachael. Glenn is now a professional walking guide, based in Kariba, and specialising in Mana Pools.

We assembled at Meikles Hotel and were immediately met by Lol Searle and her son, Drew. It is now two years since Andy's untimely death in a helicopter accident. Lol is working at Chinhoyi School and finding the workload to be very challenging. Drew is growing up with other small children around him, something that would have been quite difficult in Hwange National Park. Lol very kindly donated a beautiful wooden carving (African Head) for our next fund raising event. If anyone would like a private viewing then please contact me.

We travelled north to Chinhoyi, one of the main trouble spots of recent times, where many farmers and their labourers have been badly victimised. As we pulled in to refuel, the garage attendants were sweeping up broken glass, the result of the previous car being set upon by a gang of thugs. Fortunately, the driver knew the local MP and telephoned him. He arrived very quickly and broke up the trouble and the youths duly dispersed. In our ten day visit this was the only direct evidence of any lawlessness that we witnessed.

Later that evening, as we approached Kariba, we witnessed an act of both futility and compassion. For a 36 hour period a group of local conservationists had been searching a large, densely overgrown area, for an injured elephant. A vet had driven 150 kms to be on standby and a National Parks ecologist had driven 200 kms to fire the dart gun. Unfortunately, the elephant wasn't found and the mission was aborted after the best part of 36 hours of hard work and good intentions. Such is the frustration of outback Africa !

From Kariba we drove to Mana Pools National Park to find that one other vehicle and ourselves were the only visitors to this pristine area, a World Heritage Site. This enabled us to occupy the VIP lodge, a two storey house some 15 metres from the banks of the Zambezi. We could not believe our eyes and luck as we arrived there. We celebrated with a beer as we watched and listened to the hippos some 50 metres away in the river, with the occasional elephant

strolling in the background, against the Zambian landscape.

We felt as if we had the whole of the Zambezi Valley to ourselves on our sunset drive past elephants, impalas, a lone buffalo bull and the whole works.

The Zambezi Valley was formerly home to 1200 black rhinos. None have been found since 1993, thanks to the readily available AK47s north of the river.

The next morning, we met with the dedicated men of Mana Pools. They told us how they had recently lost one of their colleagues, Dzvaka, to gun shot wounds in a shoot-out with armed poachers. Because the radio communications weren't working and because the designated pilot was unable to fly, Dzvaka died whilst being driven to hospital. It appears that PlanB didn't exist, whereby outside help could have been sought. We are investigating with Medical Air Rescue Services, methods of emergency evacuation, to try to prevent this sort of thing happening again.

We were presented with a list of kit requirements, some of which we are in the process of purchasing. Unfortunately, we were unable to meet up with my old mate Warden Alex, who had rushed to Harare to be with his injured brother. He was the victim of a thugs attack, leaving him with a broken arm and a disembowelled stomach.

Tashinga, head quarters of Matusadona IPZ, is home to the rhino rehabilitation programme. Here, rhino calves bred at Imire game ranch are brought for a three year programme, during which they spend 10 hours each day being encouraged to browse for themselves. Then they are released to mother nature. This has been a most successful operation with 6 sub-adults roaming the park and 3 still in 'captivity'. We presented the two rhino minders with multi-tool knives as token thanks for their commitment to the cause.

Next it was off to Imire, to meet the parents of these rhino calves. Norman Travers was the pioneer of captive rhino breeding and how rewarding it has been for me to follow their progress over the past 14 years. We presented Norman with some more radios for his men, particularly vital in these troubled times. Nearly 50% of his land has been reclaimed by the government and many of the surrounding farms are occupied by squatters. The future of Imire's 5 adult rhinos has to be questionable at the moment and we wish Norman and his staff well in their quest to remain on their land.

Our next port of call was the Midlands conservancy, near Kewkwe, where we were hosted by Bob and Jenny Swift. I had previously been briefed on recent

progress by John and Annie Gripper, trustees of the Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust, based in Oxford. We learned of the appointment of a new conservator, the deaths of four rhinos in the past year and four replacement births. Three of the deaths were by natural causes, perhaps fighting, whilst the fourth was from a clear case of poaching. There appear to be too many males in the area and this will lead to territorial fighting, and some more deaths.

We evidenced first hand the result of an intruding male on Bob Swift's property, causing nasty wounds to the rear end of his female. This bull has subsequently attacked a four year old calf, but Chris Foggin has twice been there in the past month to treat the wounds. The second visit involved the hire of a helicopter at US\$400 per hour, as approaching on foot was becoming too difficult. We will help with these expenses.

Overall, the Midlands is proving to be a most satisfactory breeding programme, with numbers more than doubling in 10 years. We are donating towards the purchase of a Land Rover for the conservator.

Richard Pascall played host to us at his lovely wildlife property, Gourlays. This is brilliant rhino country and Richard's rhino have enjoyed perhaps the best growth rate of any of the conservancies. We donated four radios for his patrol work, to replace some that had disappeared during recent events. Gourlays has been occupied by about 50 families of 'war veterans'.

We spent the next night at Miombo Safari Lodge, courtesy of Paul de Montille, whom we have been supporting for the past 18 months. Paul has taken on the role of helping to save snared animals and the SAVE FOUNDATION has been purchasing the necessary drugs. Paul is greatly assisted by Nkulemane, and we saw the great pile of snares that he had confiscated.

We also visited Greg Rasmussen's team in nearby Gwayi and congratulated them on their anti-poaching patrols. They also had a significant pile of confiscated snares, ranging from mine cable to telegraph pole wire to fencing wire to domestic wire.

As we left, we popped in to say hello to Julia Salnicki, who was suffering the aftermath of a hornet bite.

It was at Hwange that we had our best game drive, both in the National Park and the neighbouring Touch the Wild Estate, home to the famous Presidential herd of elephants. We came across about forty of them and one came within 3 metres of our vehicle. We also saw a pride of 14 lions, the closest being about 10 metres away.

The next day we drove through the park to Sinamatella Camp. On the way, we were stopped by an elephant in the middle of the road who slowly approached us, sniffed us with his trunk right up to the windscreen, and then slowly ambled off. Quite a moment! At Sinamatella we saw our donated pushbikes in use, and we were delighted to see much of our donated kit from 6 years ago, still in good condition and being used to the maximum.

Warden Norman English has been off-colour recently, suffering from stress and anxiety caused by the general malaise around him. We wish him well in his recovery back to good health.

In the National Parks system there is a clear lethargy and apathy brought about by the current situation in Zimbabwe. The men in the field are lacking in encouragement and, without exception, Glenn Tatham and myself were warmly welcomed wherever we went. They appreciated our visit, and whilst it is only a small contribution, they would be heartened by our concern for their welfare. Over the next few months we intend to supply as much of their needs as possible, mainly in the form of ex-army kit from Europe.

Overall, it was a most interesting and satisfying trip to our projects and we thank Glenn for his brilliant leadership and dedication to the cause. No one has worked harder for National Parks over the past 30 years than Glenn, and maybe this trip will rekindle some of his energies back towards the parks and its men.

Travelling to Zim?

Greg Rasmussen has some wild-dog radio collars waiting in New Zealand to be taken to Harare. Do any of our readers know anyone who is travelling to Zimbabwe in the fairly near future who could act as a courier for these? We can despatch them to your home address in Australia or New Zealand. Please give me a call if you can help. Thanks

Glenn Tatham Safaris

If any one would like a tailor-made safari with Glenn, then please feel free to contact me. It could include walking, canoeing, camping, driving or whatever you require.

No-one knows Zimbabwean parks better than Glenn.

I thoroughly recommend this type of
adventure to you.