



SAVE FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA (INC)

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EXTINCTION IS FOREVER!

The majestic black rhino - an animal driven to the brink of extinction across Africa to satisfy human gratification and greed - is under new threat. In Zimbabwe an even more sinister poacher is appearing in the few places in which prehistoric beasts still live. This poacher kills de-horned rhinos - animals who have had their horns removed by conservationists to protect them - apparently to ensure annihilation of the species and therefore increase the selling price of garnered rhino horn. The price of horn is skyrocketing and illegal traders are hiring poachers with increasingly sophisticated weaponry to reap the bloody harvest. It is the ugliest of battles. Animals die. Conservationists and rangers die. Poachers die. Only the recipients of the horn are safe.

Death by natural causes or illness is difficult to accept at any time, but the senseless killing of animals, for the gratification of man's needs or greed, is always unacceptable.

The black rhino is one such animal that has become the victim of human hands.

A crisis is occurring for the survival of black rhinos in Africa!

There are two species of rhino in Africa, the aggressive black rhino and the bigger, more docile white rhino. About 3,300 black rhinos remain throughout Africa: it is estimated that a million roamed the plains at the turn of the century. Three other types of rhino inhabit Asia - the Javan, the Sumatran and the Indian rhino. All are under threat.

Where only 35 years ago 65,000 rhinos roamed, today as few as 3,300 remain. **That's a decline of 95%** While here and there drought situations or other natural causes may have reduced the numbers somewhat, the drastic decline has occurred almost exclusively due to poaching. These are not meat hunters, but a well organised crime syndicate, which has managed over the years (Mafia style) to set up a highly efficient operation, bribing its way into Government officials, equipping the poacher with the latest automatic weaponry - at which point he becomes no more than a hired killer.

Rhino horn was used to the largest extent in North Yemen (now Yemen)

for ceremonial dagger handles as boys reached manhood. With the increase of the petro-dollar wealth in the seventies, poaching began to increase significantly.

The main market now is the **Far East** where it is used for medicinal purposes, namely, a fever-reducing agent - or so it is thought. The main buyers are Taiwan, South Korea, China and Thailand, and rhino horn sells for up to \$20,000 per kilo, there being 4 to 5 kilos on an adult rhino. Obviously, in today's world with modern medicine (even if the myth were correct) it would be far more efficient and cheaper to use synthetic drugs.

The third, but very small, market is India where horn is used for aphrodisiac purposes. Again, this claim has no proven value, but the myth continues.

Zimbabwe used to have the biggest breeding herd of black rhinos in the world, but recent heavy poaching has reduced it to fourth, behind South Africa, Namibia and Kenya. Once plentiful in the Zambezi Valley, the Matusadona, Chizarira, Chirisa and Hwange National Parks, they are now only found in Matusadona, Hwange and Matobo. Zimbabwe has approximately 15% of the remaining black rhinos, and every effort is being made to preserve them.

Poachers have steadily moved south in their search for rhino horn. They have gutted Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia and now Zimbabwe. Next, poachers will redouble their focus on Namibia and South Africa.

Since poaching began in Zimbabwe in late 1984, there have been about 1,200 rhinos killed in the Zambezi Valley and approximately 800

poached in the other National Parks. Hence, Zimbabwe's black rhinos have declined from over 2,000 to about 275 in 1993, and now back to 500. During this time some 220 poachers have lost their lives whilst several have been captured along with AK47 automatic weapons and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. President Mugabe has declared the black rhino to be part of the National Heritage of Zimbabwe and armed poachers will be seen to be illegal insurgents and treated accordingly! In just about every case the poachers have come from Zambia, as indicated by their cigarettes, matches and footwear. Many others have been caught as they illegally enter Zimbabwe from Zambia, usually downstream from Kariba or upstream from Victoria Falls.

A Perth-based conservation organisation, the **SAVE FOUNDATION of Australia (Inc)** started fund-raising in June 1987, and has so far raised and spent in excess of \$1,000,000 on vital anti-poaching equipment for the Zimbabwe National Parks. This includes 5 Landcruisers, 1 Landrover, 1 Bedford truck, 15 motorbikes, 15 outboard motors, 10 reconditioned engines and gearboxes, computer equipment, mobile field radios, radio tracking collars and tons of spare parts for all of the above.

The **SAVE FOUNDATION** is different to most other non-profit making organisations, being a **totally voluntary** Foundation with all its expenses, such as secretarial, communications and travel, being sponsored by a private company. This means that all funds raised are wisely and responsibly spent on vital anti-poaching equipment, as requested by the Director General of the National Parks & Wildlife Authority or his Chief Warden.

Items that are currently required by the National Parks include: articles of personal kit for the game scouts, e.g. rucksacks, boots, sleeping bags and raincoats; vehicles for patrol work, especially 4WD and motorbikes; tools and equipment for basic maintenance work and radio tracking equipment.

Part of the work of the Zimbabwe National Parks is their periodic rhino capture programme, in which the rhinos are darted and partially dehorned. In the early '90s, some of these rhinos went to private sanctuaries in other parts of Zimbabwe, some went to U.S.A. for a captive breeding programme and 8 went to Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo, for the same reason.

Dehorning

Approximately 2,000 black and white rhinos were killed by poachers in Zimbabwe from July 1984, despite major anti-poaching efforts by the Department of National Parks. In 1991 about 300 rhinos were killed, and deaths were high in 1992 and 1993. No rhinos were killed between March 1994 and January 2000, but 50 have been poached in the last 3 years. However, plenty of calves are being born, in all areas.

In response to the continued poaching threat a proposal was submitted in 1990 to carry out an experimental dehorning operation. It was approved in April 1991 and since then more than 300 rhinos have been dehorned (regrowth is at the rate of 7 - 8 cm per year). Resources to protect them are scarce. Recently, dehorning has been re-introduced to combat the current rise in poaching.

Initially, in the early nineties, quite a few de-horned rhinos were shot, showing the poachers' intent to make the rhino extinct. Taiwan and China

each have at least **7 tons of stockpiled horn**, and its value will increase dramatically with their extermination.

In July 1997 the Department of National Parks was reconstructed into the National Parks Conservation Fund, now National Parks & Wildlife Authority, and given the responsibility of managing its own resources, including the large amounts of money generated by tourism, game sales and hunting. This should show signs of improvement within their internal budgeting requirements. Since then, we are seeing less dependence on donations from the **SAVE FOUNDATION**.

Between 1988 and 1993 a number of rhinos were moved to private ranches in different parts of Zimbabwe, in particular Save Valley, Bubiana, Midlands, Chiredzi and Turk Mine. These private **conservancies** also receive aid from the **SAVE FOUNDATION**, and their situation is being regularly monitored. These rhinos have also been dehorned, but unfortunately, 9 were poached in 1993. Since then, breeding has been very successful and the numbers have doubled in the conservancies.

In September 1993 four **Intensive Protection Zones (IPZs)** were established at Sinametella (Hwange), Matusadona, Matobo and Chipinge, and these are seen as the last hope for Zimbabwe's National Parks rhinos. Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe considered the situation so critical that he ordered the army and police to support rangers in protecting the remaining rhinos in the wild. The rhino protection infrastructure is now better than ever, with better housing, equipment and more patrols. **There is now definite cause for optimism for the rhino's future.**

