



NEWSLETTER – September 2005

Volume 17, Number 1

Patrons: The Lord McAlpine of West Green, David Gower OBE, Bryce Courtenay AM, Nick Price

ZIMBABWE REVIEW AND UPDATE

The April Newsletter states that the number of rhinos has doubled in the last 10 years in Zimbabwe. In 1993 they reached an all time low, and that is when the authorities started to do something about it, forming several **Intensive Protection Zones (IPZs)**, namely: **Matusadona** (Lake Kariba); **Sinamatella** (Hwange); **Matopos** (near Bulawayo) and **Chipinge** (Eastern Highlands).

At the same time rhinos were translocated from the Zambezi Valley to private commercial game ranches, as follows. The **Midlands, Save Valley and Bubiana Conservancies** all started with about 30 and have shown good increases over the years. **Chiredzi River** began with ten, as did **Gourlays Ranch**, and both these areas have had good growth. **Malilangwe**, an American-owned ranch, purchased black and white rhinos from South Africa, and these too are doing well. Gourlays has been under seige by war veterans and the rhinos will be shortly uplifted to a safer area.

Imire now has seven rhinos (four adults and three sub-adults), with a very successful breeding programme that has resulted in thirteen offspring being produced since the mid '90s, with the latest birth on 18 April. Two adults and eight sub-adults have been returned to the wild at Matusadona, and one adult was sadly killed by an elephant last year. Her orphan calf, Kamchacha, has been kindly funded for her milk powder by one of our members, **Kay Kubank**.

Our main focus of interest in the IPZs is Sinamatella, run by **Norman English**, the last of the white wardens. He has been there for 13 years, but has now been transferred to a fishing area, with no working radios, no telephone, and a house that hasn't been occupied for some time! Fortunately, it's near the Midlands and he can use his rhino expertise to help that conservancy. When our safari groups visit Sinamatella we are privileged to go rhino tracking with Norman, albeit with the aid of technology - rhino tracking devices in their horns.

We are sorry to see Norman go and we sincerely thank him for his commitment and hard work over the years, and also to his wife, Penny, for her support. And it is also a sad thing that his replacement, who started on 1 June, has already resigned. He resigned because the area is such a hotspot. To give the background: 35 rhinos have been killed in the last 2½ years in the Sinamatella area. It would seem that a syndicate works from the nearby town of Hwange, sufficiently well connected for two recent witnesses to have died mysteriously and for the main evidence (two horns) to have disappeared!

In the Midlands the poaching continues, with eight poached carcasses being found, including two fresh ones. **Chris Foggin**, the only vet allowed to handle wild life, works virtually single handedly to do all the wildlife requirements. Recently, Chris and his team have been working on horn implants in the Midlands, during which time poachers cheekily killed two rhinos.

This rhino management programme involved over 30 adult rhinos, but sadly came to a sudden stop in late July when the helicopter crashed on take-off, causing serious chest and lung injuries to Chris and minor damage to John McTaggart, the pilot, and Chris' son Greg. Thankfully, Chris is now recovering and back at work.



Chris Foggin was trapped under the helicopter skid.

Stop Press: Another fresh rhino carcass just found in the Midlands.

SOME OF OUR RECENT ACTIVITIES

In the lowveld, in May, Mike Palmer and myself went out with Chris and a team of scouts for ear notching and horn implants. The ground scouts go out first, and locate a rhino, then call in the spotter plane which flies round in circles keeping track of the rhino. The helicopter then comes in at a low level and darts the rhino, which goes down in about three minutes. Then the team comes in and starts collecting data and monitoring the rhino's well-being, whilst Chris uses his great skill and expertise to perform the vital duties. Power is supplied by a **Honda** generator, which was donated by SAVE FOUNDATION two years ago. This has been really useful and is highly efficient.



Chris preparing a horn for implanting a tracking device, powered by the red Honda generator.

The team proceeds to cover the eyes, cover the animal with grass and branches and spray it with water to keep it cool, and then it can start work. Horn removal is carried out with a **Husqvarna** chain saw, and Husqvarna have recently very kindly donated another one to help out.



The Husqvarna chain saw cuts off the back horn and trims the front one.

We are now involved with a micro-light aircraft, having paid the freight for it to Zimbabwe and some running costs for the first three months of some very useful rhino monitoring in Save Valley, with **Senga Bradie** as the volunteer pilot. We hope to make it available for aerial monitoring to a wider range of rhino projects. Thanks, Senga, for starting this.



Pilot Senga and passenger Nicholas, taking to the skies.

We regret to announce that **Blythe Loutit**, who founded Save the Rhino Trust in Namibia in 1985 and for the past two years has been ill, passed away recently. Blythe was a legend in Namibian rhino conservation and received a number of awards over the years, not least of which was the BBC Conservationist of the Year Award in 2001. To her husband, Rudi, and all her many friends and admirers, we send our condolences.

We also support **Johnny Rodrigues**, who runs the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force. We paid for the purchase of M99, an expensive and powerful anaesthetic used for darting the larger animals.

Also in the past few months, we brokered a meeting at the Hwange Main Camp for all the local NGOs concerned about the escalating snaring problems. As a follow-up, we have purchased eight more radios to enhance the communications between all the interested parties, in order for quicker reaction time to eventuate. However, we do acknowledge the difficulties in assembling all the relevant parties (licensed darter and support personnel) at the same place at the same time.



This young elephant calf subsequently died from the wounds inflicted by this multiple snare, a disturbing side effect caused by food shortages amongst the local people.

We want to introduce more anti-poaching units into the Hwange area in order to make a greater impact on the illegal snaring. We intend to seek the support of the David Shepherd Foundation in England, Born Free Foundation, Care for the Wild, UK Save the Rhino Group, TUSK, and the Hwange Lion Research, to fund this important project.



This zebra was rescued before the wires cut through his throat.

We are fortunate to be supported by a wide range of individuals and companies, and this year we have acknowledged them with **Certificates of Appreciation**, as follows:

Hunter Hall Investment Management Limited; Peter Hall; Martin Storey; Kay Kubank; Peter Lemon; Dave and Adele Begovich; James Thompson; Mike Palmer; Iain Macgregor and Mrs. Mac's Pies; Anne Bluntish; Norman McNamara; Steve Harrison and Topline; Nicky Marlow; Karin Keighley; Bev Poor; Dawn Newman; Vanessa Sturrock; Keith Dybing; Jackie and Karl Wigh; Reggie Fernandes; Allan Bale; Iain MacGregor; Lynn Murray; South African Airways; Husqvarna Chain Saws; Ennio Tavani and Moore Stephens BG; Kimberley Clarke; Kevin Judge and Judge Constable; Evelyn Wong; Kim and Geoff Hoddy and Nicholas Duncan.

At the well-attended AGM in July, the Executive was increased to 7, as follows; President--Nicholas Duncan; Vice President--Kevin Judge; Secretary--Evelyn Wong; Treasurer--Mike Palmer; Special Projects--Geoff Hoddy; Committee members--Kim Hoddy and Martin Storey.

Please visit our web site - www.savefoundation.org.au, managed by Martin (thanks), where greater details on our activities can be found, together with our audited Financial Statements for the past five years. Why not download some membership forms and pass them onto your friends?

Since April, funding has supported the following projects:

Tracking equipment	\$35,373
Rhino management/operations	\$10,276
Communication equipment	\$5,293
Anti-poaching patrol wages	\$5,055
4WD tyres	\$3,090
Other projects	\$2,549
TOTAL	\$61,636