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NEWSLETTER – September 2006

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

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we enter our twentieth year since inception, our goal is to raise \$200,000 for more rhino management equipment, services and supplies, especially in Zimbabwe. We are targeting to make at least \$100,000 from our dinner/auction with David Gower, \$50,000 from our two safaris in the next few weeks, and the balance will come from a variety of sources throughout the year. So, let's make it our biggest and best year ever!

The bulk of this newsletter is a pretty comprehensive report written by Jenny, Julie and Nicky, who were my delightful company on a recent 12-day visit to Zimbabwe. What we saw and experienced far exceeded our wildest dreams, and thanks to all our hosts in Zimbabwe who made this possible.

As always, please keep on telling your friends and associates about our work and encourage them to join our support team in any way they can. Thanks.

Nicholas S. Duncan

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Fifty-three members and friends attended our AGM on 11 July 2006, during which time a full review of our year's work was illustrated on the BIG screen. The following Executive was elected: **President** – *Nicholas Duncan*; **Vice-President** – *Mike Palmer*; **Treasurer** – *Evelyn Wong*; **Secretary** – *Kim Hoddy*; **Special Projects** – *Nicky Marlow*; **Website & Technical Assistance** – *Martin Storey*; **Committee Member** – *Geoff Hoddy*. Miriam Bauman was invited to attend all future meetings.

The President presented Kevin Judge, our retiring Vice-President, with a stone sculpture of 3 rhinos, duly inscribed, in honour of his 11 years of tremendous support of the Foundation whilst on the Executive.

Further details of this meeting and the audited financial statements can be found on our website: www.savefoundation.org.au.

'BEHIND THE SCENES' TRIP TO ZIMBABWE WITH NICHOLAS DUNCAN

by *Julie Bain, Nicky Marlow and Jenny Solomon*
May/June 2006



Jenny, Julie and Nicky with a young male cub.

We started our trip at Perth airport where we discovered that we were a few kilos over our baggage limit. Most of this comprised tents, vehicle parts and other items to donate to various people along our way. Fortunately the airline staff allowed us to take all this gear without paying any excess.

When we got to Harare we went to Lisa Hywood's home and saw her captive civets, African wild cats and servals, including two adorable serval kittens. Lisa is the founder of the Tikki Hywood Trust and is breeding these threatened species for future release into the wild. SAVE FOUNDATION is assisting Lisa with the costs of captive breeding and with translocation costs. These animals will be released at Mavuradonha (our next stop) when the enclosures are finished.

At Mavuradonha we met James and Janine Varden (of Varden Riding Safaris). James and Janine are looking after 'Kimba' the elephant calf that members of SAVE FOUNDATION have been sponsoring.

Kimba is a delightful animal, with loads of personality and a determination to get her own way. She will be released into a suitable herd of elephants when she is old enough. The local police were

visiting to discuss the future use of this property. It was good for them to be there when we arrived so they got some sense of the importance of tourism and saw first hand that people are prepared to pay to see wildlife.



Kimba and her constant companion, Piggy.

We then drove into the Mavuradonha Wilderness where the Vardens have their tourist accommodation (Kopi Tops) and riding safaris. We went for an evening ride along the valley and heard baboons and bush pigs and saw diggings of aardvarks and elephants. We had dinner at 'The Lodge' - a fantastic spot with incredible views and a lifestyle reminiscent of Somerset Maugham. The enclosures for Lisa's cats being built near here will be ready for use soon.



Lucky Number 13.

Imire Game Ranch was our next destination and this is a privately owned conservancy where the Travers family (John and Judy were our hosts) had the foresight to import rhinos and other fauna as commercial tourist attractions rather than relying on hunting. They acquired 7 orphaned rhino calves from the Zambezi Valley, in 1987, when poaching was rife there and have been breeding these successfully, with 13 births. We visited one large male rhino, Noddy, who is destined for translocation to Botswana (now there) and three other adults, plus 3 young adults that will enter the national breeding programme.

We had lunch by a lake's edge and while we were there elephants and rhinos were brought in for us to see. We fed the elephants by hand and got incredibly close to the rhinos. It is easy to forget that they are wild animals when they come up so close to you.

While there, we also saw captive lions and hyenas, impala, zebra, wildebeest, giraffes and hippos. We watched kudu and nyala while we sat at the lake's edge watching the sun go down and drinking a gin and tonic. It was absolutely magical. SAVE FOUNDATION has been involved with Imire for many years and is currently helping by paying part of the wages of the rhino keepers and anti-poaching staff.

The next morning we got up early and went bareback elephant riding. What a fabulous experience! The elephants ambled along while the mahouts told us about the animals and their respective personalities. We walked along another lake's edge as the sun was coming up. The bird life was extraordinary. What a fascinating place!



What an experience and a privilege!

We left Imire and drove along some rough back roads to a rendezvous with Norman English, Eleanor Lowe and Ken King near Chivhu. We caught up with the local news from the Midlands conservancy and heard that there had been lots of poaching, 25 rhinos in 2 years, that could be an 'inside job'. Norman talked about the recent training that his men had received and how the new anti poaching team was improving. Nicholas gave Norman five tents for his team and these were very gratefully received. There are currently 12 rhinos being monitored in this area with transmitters, field equipment and radios being donated by SAVE FOUNDATION.

From Chivhu we drove to Malilangwe which is a private conservancy where white rhinos are breeding so well they are able to be translocated to other areas. We met the expert 'rhino team': Chris Foggin, a vet with the Zimbabwe Wildlife Veterinary Unit, Raoul du Toit and Lovemore Mungwashu from WWF's Rhino Management Programme, Colin Wenham (Manager at Malilangwe), Greg Foggin, Glenton Coombes (helicopter pilot extraordinaire) and Natasha Anderson. These people were all at Malilangwe to translocate some rhinos to the Save conservancy and to mark any previously unmarked animals for future identification.



Colin, Chris, Nicholas and some ground crew.

The following morning we waited while the scouts went out looking for the specific rhinos that had been selected for translocation. One of them sighted a male black rhino that had been injured by another rhino and needed veterinary treatment. We all leapt into the back of an open Land Rover and drove at breakneck speed towards the rhino's location. It was great fun weaving in and out of trees as we hurtled along the rough bush track. Colin talked to Raoul and Greg in the plane that was circulating overhead and they guided us to the correct location. Chris, Natasha and Glenton were in the helicopter and Chris darted the injured animal. We all stood by and waited for the rhino to succumb to the dart. We were picked up by the helicopter and had an exhilarating flight to the site where the injured rhino lay.



Colin checking the breathing and Chris notching the ear.

The rhino was blind folded and had ear muffs put in its ears to reduce its stress levels.

Chris was working on the very nasty looking wound on its left hind leg. It had been gored through the knee by the other rhino. Chris decided the rhino's leg was not broken but he concluded it might have some ligament damage. He applied antibiotics and anti inflammatory and removed the maggots from the wound. He used an insecticide to prevent screw worm larvae from hatching in the open wound. Throughout the whole process the rhino's pulse and temperature were monitored. We'd put leafy branches over the animal and these were sprayed

continuously with water to keep the animal cool. Chris surmised that the rhino had been dehorned previously but its regrowing horn was not large enough for him to fit a transmitter. We then went back to the vehicle and left Chris to inject the reversal drug and run to the awaiting helicopter.

When we got back to camp the scouts reported a sighting of one of the white rhinos that needed to have its ears notched. We all hopped into the vehicle again and went out to where the rhino had already been darted by Chris. When we got there the rhino was still on its feet but very groggy and Colin, Natasha and Nicholas jumped out of the vehicle and grabbed it by the tail to make sure it lay down in a convenient spot rather than wedging itself into some inaccessible bushes. It was very exciting to watch them walk up to the partially drugged animal and it was unclear what the animal would do next! After the rhino had been processed it was given the reversal drug and we left the site hurriedly!

The scouts then found an adult male white rhino that was suitable for translocation. Again Raoul and Greg circled in the plane while Chris, Natasha and Glenton darted it from the helicopter. This rhino's horn was large enough to be able to take a horn transmitter and so Chris and Colin drilled a hole in the side of its horn and another one straight down the horn's axis.



Tracking device being implanted to the horn.

Every last piece of horn had to be collected and given to National Parks, to prevent it being sold on the black market. They then added dental acrylic to the horn to hold the transmitter in place.



This way please!

After the transmitter was in position and the animal's ears had been notched, a crate for transportation was placed near to it.

A rope was passed around its head, through a hole on the end of the crate and this was tied to a vehicle on the other side. Another rope was tied

around the rhino's hind leg. Chris then gave it a partial reversal drug so that it was able to stand up and stumble, aided by the rope, into the crate. The crate was quickly secured and was lifted by the crane onto the back of a vehicle. The crane was only just strong enough to lift such a heavy weight and there was much tension in the air as the lifting took place. The truck then drove to the airstrip where the crate was transferred to another more suitable truck and taken to Save Conservancy for the rhino's release. While we were at the airstrip a leopard appeared and we were able to follow it along the track and to watch it on several occasions. What a thrilling sight it was to see this elusive animal!

The next day we waited until the afternoon before setting off to put another horn transmitter in a rhino that was suitable for translocation. The scouts found a large bull white rhino and we all drove down together to where it had been darted. This was a large bull indeed! The whole process of drilling his horn and fitting the transmitter, notching his ears and loading him into the crate went incredible smoothly and quickly. Again there were some anxious moments as he was made partially conscious and stumbled into the crate. This part of the exercise has the capacity to be extremely dangerous if the animal does not co-operate!

It was now getting late in the afternoon and so there was time for only one more ear notching. This time a young bull calf was chosen. He was darted and then the helicopter was used to keep his mother away from the processing team. What a cute little fellow he was! His ear notching went ahead uneventfully and he had green paint applied to his forehead to indicate that he had been recently processed. When the anaesthetic was reversed he became really confused and thought the vehicle was his mother! It was rather sad to see him running after us seeking reassurance that was not forthcoming.



"I want my mummy!"

SAVE FOUNDATION contributes considerably to this rhino monitoring and translocation process. The

transmitters, ground to air radios, various veterinary equipment and vehicle parts are all generously donated by our foundation and gratefully received, helping to keep these projects on track.



Implant tracking devices and other basics for Chris Foggin.

The next interesting stop in our journey was at Verity Bowman's Dambari field station near Bulawayo, headquarters of Marwell Trust Zimbabwe. Verity has partnered with SAVE FOUNDATION in various aspects of rhino conservation. She is currently captively breeding duikers and we managed to see the yellow-rumped, blue and common species. The red duiker remained hidden. Verity provided us with a sumptuous lunch and took us to the local markets where we bargained for artefacts.

We continued on to Main Camp at Hwange National Park and that night we had supper with the 'lion project team': Zeke, Jane and Peter. We had a braai and talked about the possible reasons why the government had decided to close down their project. It was very disappointing for them because they had no explanation. It was unfortunate that we couldn't go into the park with them because they had been banned from entering it. In recent years we have helped with vehicle maintenance and collars.

We stayed that night with Paul de Montille who runs DART. Paul is involved with removing snares from injured animals and in darting various other species including hyenas. He and his friend, Nolwen, took us into the park the next evening looking for hyenas. We were extremely lucky and we saw a hyena as well as various other species including African wild cats and springhares.

The next day we met Sharon Pincott, from Brisbane, who monitors and studies the Presidential Elephants. Sharon is very dedicated to her work and assists in the removal of snares from many species. She is supported in her work on the elephants by SAVE FOUNDATION who provide a laptop computer, vehicle running costs and big packets of cheezels and chocolates (duly delivered by us)! Sharon took us out

to visit the elephants and it is amazing how close she can get to these magnificent beasts.



Sharon at her little rondaval and her new "goodies".

They are truly awe inspiring! It was a bit nerve wracking to see them so closely when you consider that they are totally wild animals. We were very lucky to see this herd (the 'L' herd) because it was the first time that Sharon had seen them for four months.

Later that day we visited the Painted Dog Research Centre and met Peter, Martin, John and Jon. They have an extremely well constructed and managed breeding facility that was designed and built by John Lemon and his team. At this centre, painted dogs will be bred or rehabilitated and then released into the wild. We went tracking some of the radio-collared painted dogs with John Lemon and Jon Keates from Perth Zoo and although we didn't find the dogs we saw our first wild lioness which was very exciting!

We then headed down to the Hide which is a fabulous place with every conceivable luxury that a tourist could wish for. Many of the watering points near the Hide in Hwange National Park were not properly maintained last year and many animals suffered from thirst. SAVE FOUNDATION, in conjunction with other NGOs and donors, is providing the spare parts and fuel for the water pumps to ensure that there is sufficient water available for the animals this year. We visited some of the water holes including Kennedy 1 and 2 and saw the water flowing and this attracted the most amazing wildlife.



Owen (r) and his team are doing a great job.

We saw many, many elephants, wildebeest, zebras, impala, and giraffes.



One of the visitors to the Hide.

We also saw ostriches, red hartebeest, steenbok and wart hogs. In the evening we went for a night drive and saw lions, including one of the radio-collared ones, bush babies, genets, bat eared foxes and black backed jackals. The number of wild animals that we saw was astounding and it was especially exciting because we could get so close to them. One of the lionesses even charged at the vehicle and later that night we saw her again but this time she was trying to ambush a wildebeest. This is such a contrast to the wildlife in Australia which is usually small and extremely cryptic.

Our guides at the Hide were particularly obliging and spent considerable time ensuring that we got to see all that we could. We were extremely lucky to see two cheetahs.



Male cheetah next to an anthill.

These are very elusive animals and it had been some time since that had been observed. We went for a dawn walk with our guide Daffy and saw lots of wildebeest and impala. This is a truly magical place.

From the Hide we drove to Sinamatella, a National Parks camp within Hwange National Park. We had a fabulous view over the park from our cabins and we caught our first glimpse of wild buffalo. Our visit to

Sinamatella coincided with the arrival of 14 new anti-poaching scouts who are being paid by our foundation. The new scouts were receiving their initial training about why it is important to save rhinos. They had been given their uniforms and boots and we were able to hand out bags of mealie meal and beans and bottles of cooking oil.



The new 14-man rhino monitoring team.

While we were there we also met the school teacher who is being funded by some of our members. We had dinner with several of the National Parks staff including Moses (senior warden), Hilary (ecologist) and Mafu, who has been maintaining the local the water pumps since 1971! We had a very interesting conversation about the rhino poaching in the areas which has decreased this year following the shooting of some poachers last year.

The final destination in Zimbabwe was Victoria Falls. We spent three days there doing all the touristy things: looking at the falls, dining in Victorian splendour at the Victoria Falls Hotel, canoeing on the Zambezi River, walking with the lions, elephant riding and haggling for souvenirs in the market. We met Charles Brightman who runs the local anti-poaching unit, another of our minor projects. Charles is an amazing naturalist and he took us for a nature walk in one of the sites near the falls where there is considerable poaching.

We saw lots of birds, a crocodile, aardvark burrows, and we managed to get 'up close and personal' with a herd of buffaloes. Charles even said at one stage we should get ready to run when he gave the signal. Thankfully this didn't happen!

From Victoria Falls we went into Botswana and continued our tourist adventures at Chobe National Park. We then ended our journey with Nicholas and Julie returning to Harare and Jenny and Nicky continuing to the Okavango Delta.

We had a fabulous, life-changing trip that will stay in our memories for a long, long time to come. It was great to see the amazing work that SAVE FOUNDATION supports and to meet the dedicated people who are trying to make a difference. If you'd like to be part of one of these future trips, just give Nicholas a call on 9444 6550.

RIP – CLEM COETZEE

Sadly, Zimbabwe's legendary wildlife man, Clem Coetzee, passed away on the same day as Steve Irwin. Clem was the pioneer of rhino translocation within Zimbabwe in the 1960s, and then repeated the formulae for elephant movement in the early nineties.

Clem died from a sudden heart attack on his farm in the lowveld - our condolences to his family.

Naturally, we were also devastated by the sad loss of Steve and thank him for his contribution to wildlife conservation.



AN EVENING WITH
OUR PATRON,
DAVID GOWER

Tuesday, 12 December, 7 pm
Grand Ballroom, Hyatt Regency Perth

- 4-course meal
- beers, wines and soft drinks
- David's entertaining speech
- auction of sporting memorabilia,
African safaris, stone sculptures
and paintings

Tickets - \$110 (all inclusive), Members' Special \$95
Over 600 sold, just a few left!

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