

May 2008 and met conservation officials from both government and non government agencies and all of them uttered one name while we had discussions about Sumatran and Javan rhinos - that of Dr Nico van Strien. In Indonesia people call him Pak Nico (Pak means brother).

I first met Nico in 1999 when the meeting of the Asian Rhino Specialist Group was held at the Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India. I had just started my work on Indian rhinos in 1998 and meeting Nico at Kaziranga further convinced me to work in aid of Indian rhino conservation in Assam. In February 2005, the Kaziranga National Park was celebrating the 100 years of successful conservation and Nico came to Assam again at the invitation of the Kaziranga authorities to participate in the centenary celebrations. During that time the preliminary concept of the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 was developed and in November 2005, Nico and Tom Foose, visited Assam to attend the first meeting of the Rhino Task Force constituted by the Government of Assam to make the Vision a reality.

In April 2007 I heard that he was suffering from cancer but while corresponding with him through e-mail, I found him to be solid and mentally sound to fight the illness. The last time I met Nico was at the Rhino May Day Programme on 31 May 2007 held at the London Zoo. It was heartbreaking to receive an email from him in January 2008 informing us that he was not well and wanted to spend his remaining time with family.

Nico is survived by his wife, Tineke van Strien-Reijgersberg, and sons Maarten and Willem. Perhaps the greatest tribute we can pay in memory of Nico is by carrying forward the conservation tasks of Asian rhinos to ensure that all the three species of Asian rhinos (Indian rhino, Sumatran rhino and Javan rhino) live on this planet for many years to come. It will be challenging but not impossible if all of us work together for the well-being of the rhinos and their habitats.

A tribute to Hezy Shoshani

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Professor Hezy Shoshani, teacher, scientist, and great friend of the elephants, died of injuries sustained from a bomb that blew up the minibus in which he was travelling in Addis Ababa on 21 May 2008. This brought to an end nearly four decades of working with and for elephants. Hezy was Israel's leading elephant scientist, and with dual American nationality he also taught undergraduates at Wayne State University for a span of 25 years.

Having found his love for elephants as a child from reading a book, Hezy started his career as a keeper in a zoo and ended at the age of 65 with over 168 scientific publications to his name. He was a team builder and net-worker and produced encyclopaedic books, such as *Proboscidea* and *Elephants Majestic Creatures of the Wild*, that owed their excellence not only to his own prolific writing but also to his capacity to elicit the best out of his wide range of colleagues and friends. Beyond the



Iain Redmond

Professor Hezy Shoshani marks confiscated tusks at Mt Elgon National Park, Kenya 1987.

campuses he was also well known as a figure in international conferences where his infectious laugh could be heard down the halls as he tried to persuade delegates to support the interests of elephants.

Hezy had a natural curiosity for living creatures especially the rare and the strange. Once when returning from an examination of the cave dwelling elephants of Mt Elgon in Kenya he chanced upon a dead aardvark in the road. Seizing the opportunity to learn more about the anatomy of this species, he gathered the remains and they were later found by his astonished host occupying the best part of a fridge to the exclusion of the food, but science was served and the antbear was brought to American students and anatomists for their better education. Road kill examinations continued to be a favourite aspect of all his travels.

His published papers also encompassed voluminous dissections of the brain of an elephant in which he found many similarities between it and the human brain and analyses of the frozen carcass of the Yukagir mammoth. He speculated on elephant memory and was saddened at the thought that so often with one bullet all these memories would be erased. Hezy was the first anatomist to describe the pharyngeal pouch from which elephants extract water to spray themselves when overheated, and his research also extended to investigations on elephant vision. For a wider audience of elephant lovers he edited the periodic report 'Elephant', the official magazine of the Elephant Interest Group which he founded.

Ultimately he took up the case of a remote and beleaguered population of elephants living on the border of Ethiopia and Eritrea. These two countries have frequently been at war with each other and the elephants have had to run the gauntlet in their journeys

across the border. His scientific papers, with Eritrean colleagues, represent the first and only recent study of this little population. After 8 years of teaching and researching at the University of Asmara in Eritrea, the deteriorating security situation prevented his further plans in that country. However, he held to his vision and started a new project on the same elephants on the other side of the border, in Ethiopia.

Shoshani had been living in Ethiopia and teaching at Addis Ababa University for over a year. His last assignment was to help establish a research and conservation project in Ethiopia's Kafta-Shiraro Park - a national park recently established in order to protect the elephants. The danger to the elephants, who paid no attention to political borders, reminded him of his native Israel and the dangerous borders with Syria.

Having taught himself Amharic, he had good relations with local residents and sympathized with their poverty, a condition he too had known in his youth. He lobbied for local employment, to involve communities in conservation decision-making and for them to understand why it was important for the elephants to live.

The question he was trying to answer at the end of his life was the extent to which elephants needed to migrate across danger zones in order to avoid inbreeding and ensure greater genetic diversity. He told a reporter just before he died: 'I don't know whether I'll have time to collect enough material during my lifetime, but others will continue the work.' Hezy's lasting achievement will be recognized in the hearts and minds of generations of students he has taught and the friends with whom he worked.

Hezy is succeeded by his wife Sandra who for many years was also his colleague, editor and best friend.