

TRANSITION

Passing of a conservation icon

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Dr Anthony Hall-Martin, aged 68, died on 21 May 2014 after a fight with cancer. He leaves a considerable conservation legacy in his wake.

Armed with separate postgraduate degrees in botany, wildlife management and zoology, Anthony was well trained for his life in conservation. His career commenced in the then Department of Forestry and Game in Malawi in 1969, with a particular focus on the vegetation of Nyika National Park. His continued links to Malawi and its conservation efforts remained till the end of his career. Only when he joined South African National Parks did his engagement and interest in pachyderms flourish. He started with important individual recognition studies and vegetation effects of the black rhinos and elephants in the small Addo Elephant National Park—his vegetation plots are being used to this day! With his move to Kruger National Park in the early 1980s, he continued his work on elephants and rhinos, becoming SANParks expert and spokesperson on these two species. He was also one of the early members of the IUCN SSC African Elephant and Rhino Specialist Group, joining it 1976, and a founding member of the African Rhino Specialist Group—so began two decades of involvement with these groups. Anthony contributed significantly in arguing the case for African elephants on the international arena, and greatly contributed to South Africa's request to CITES to sell ivory for conservation purposes. Anthony published extensively, authoring 10 books and numerous scientific papers. Notable titles include *Elephants of Africa* and *Cats of Africa*, co-authored with the artist Paul Bosman.

Anthony climbed rapidly through the ranks in SANParks to become Director of Research and



Dr Anthony Hall-Martin.

Development in 1995. So began another quest—expanding the national parks system. In the period from 1990 till he retired from SANParks in the early 2000s, he was instrumental in adding six new national parks, and in expanding numerous others to the tune of about 400,000 ha. This effort was driven by his desire to include under-represented ecological biomes in the protected areas system, to expand the parks to larger more viable ecological units and to offer ecotourism opportunities to provide the essential revenue to SANParks to fulfil its conservation mandate. Not only did this see more and bigger homes for his beloved black rhinos and elephants, it also introduced new models of private ownership in the expanding SANParks system. Clive Walker, one of Anthony's long-term friends, aptly said that 'the nation's wild

heritage is immeasurably larger, safer, and richer as a result of Anthony's vision'. In recognition of his contribution to conservation he received a number of awards including the British Council for Zoology Award, the Bruno H Schubert Prize in Germany, the Senior Captain Scott Medal from the South African Academy of Science, and the National Geographic Society Award.

After his retirement from SANParks, together with Paul van Vliissingen (1941–2006), he was instrumental in establishing the non-profit organization African Parks. Here he continued the mission of securing the protected areas footprint but now in an Africa-wide landscape. The plan was to secure cash-strapped struggling national parks and game reserves in Africa and develop them into self-sustaining parks with

vibrant ecotourism products. As Conservation and Development Director for African Parks, Anthony championed the organization's successful entry into the conservation environment of Malawi, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Zambia. He worked till his last day.

Anthony stands out in the African conservation field by dedicating his life to his vision of conserving Africa's unique landscapes, along with its magnificent mega fauna. 'Pachyderms everywhere have reason to be grateful for Anthony's outstanding life's work', according to Professor Nigel Leader-Williams. He could not have achieved this success without the support of his wife, Catherina, and their daughters, Vega and Cate.

Bayete Nkhosi, lala khale, siya hlangana ngo lina langa (Peter Hitchins)