

Chairman's Report

I. CORRUPTION AND CONSERVATION OF PACHYDERMS

Patronage of the corrupt businessman and the corrupt official by corrupt politicians can produce formidable triangular alliances which lead to illegal and devastating exploitation of natural resources. Just as such alliances have destroyed forests in India (Vohra, 1985) so too are they responsible for the recent precipitous decline of black rhino in Africa. These corrupt alliances are undoubtedly a major driving force in the recent over-exploitation of elephant in many parts of Africa and too little attention has been paid to them. We have been too preoccupied with chasing poachers in the field and with changing fashions and trade in lands far removed from the primary area. The core of the problem is corrupt alliances which foster and promote the illegal and uncontrolled (uncontrollable?) exploitation of wildlife resources.

In tackling the rhino and elephant problem wildlife departments have emphasised prevention by going after the man doing the hunting in the field — the poacher. Traditionally, NGO's and aid organisations have similarly concentrated on supporting anti-poaching activities. The other main focus has been the illegal, and sometimes the legal, trade in ivory and horn. Trade bans have been in posed at national and inter-national levels. Much effort and money has been expended on trying to change fashions and reduce demand amongst consumers in Asia or Europe.

International trade in rhino horn has been banned by all signatories to CITES since the inception of the Convention in 1976. Producer countries placed a moratorium on the sale of government stocks of horn although Zambia recently (1984) sold a substantial stockpile of horn to North Korea.

If the trend in black rhino in Africa is anything to go by (i.e. from 60 000 plus in 1970, to c. 12 000 in 1980 and then to less than 4 000 by the end of 1986) these measures have been a signal failure. The fears that rhino have all but been eliminated from the Selous Game Reserve (Borner and Severre —Pachyderm No.6) have now been confirmed by recent surveys of the Selous. Black rhino are presently being poached in the Zambezi valley at the rate of one a day despite the capture of 15 Zambian poachers and the deaths of a further 18 in the Zambezi valley over the last two years.

The pivot of illegal and uncontrolled exploitation is the mafia-like alliance which Vohra (1985) identifies, namely, the corrupt politician, the corrupt businessman and the corrupt bureaucrat. It is almost certainly at this pivotal node in the conduit from the field to the end consumer that the greatest profits are to be had, where motivation is highest, and where the ease with which hard currency can be placed in foreign bank accounts is a major part of the spoils. The individuals involved are, through political patronage, effectively above the law in their own countries and they do not infringe international laws of the sort that lead to arrest, detention and extradition. They are largely immune to the efforts of wildlife agencies — even where these are not involved in the corruption. That immunity is almost invincible when they establish cross-border poaching operations.

International law enforcement agencies, largely unaware of the value of wildlife products, have shown little interest in involving themselves in this illegal trade and in disentangling the web of corruption which surrounds it.

So what can be done? The first step is to identify the pivotal individuals. The next is to break the alliance, through whatever means are most appropriate, and so stem the strong local, sometimes regional, demand for horn and illegal ivory. These alliances and their demands do not respect national boundaries as Zimbabwe is discov-

ering to its cost. For the most part these apparently simple steps are beyond the means and expertise of conservationists and wildlife department officials. They require the involvement of Heads of State and key professionals at a national and international level. We can merely identify the key problem.

It would be more than tragic if there were to be a repetition of the northern white rhino saga. The time for action is now. For the rhinos in the Zambezi valley another six months maybe too late, The immediate target is perfectly clear and we appeal to those who can take action to do so without delay.

II. FIELD PRIORITIES FOR ACTION ON BLACK RHINO

At the AERSG meeting held in Luangwa in July, 1986, working sessions examined priorities for field action in black rhino populations through out Africa. This exercise was due to follow the development of a continental conservation strategy and completion of the studies on black rhino systematics (see Action Plan). Rapid changes, however, in the status of rhino populations and the urgent need to provide guidance to donors made it necessary to examine priorities now. Priorities were established using the criteria developed at the Hwange meeting in 1981. A working group also drafted a comprehensive conservation strategy for black rhino which has been circulated to members for critical comment. Once these comments are received the document will be revised and submitted to IUCN for publication.

The field priorities established at the Luangwa meeting for black rhino populations in terms of paragraph 1.3 of the Action Plan follow. The dominant factor in ordering these priority areas was the size of the population. In some cases (Selous and Laikipia) revised estimates received since the Luangwa meeting would place areas at a lower priority than they appear below.

1. ZAMBEZI VALLEY — ZIMBABWE (Population estimate 750)
This area lies downstream from Lake Kariba and includes a number of components of the Zimbabwean parks and wildlife estate. The Mana Pools N.P. and the Chewore and Sapi Safari Areas comprise a World Heritage Site. The Zambezi valley complex carries the largest remaining coherent population of black rhino left in Africa and the only population of more than 500.
Key actions identified were an increase in anti-poaching forces, infrastructural development for the valley, field research, and greater co-operation between Zimbabwe and Zambia to stop cross-border poaching. (The perspective on corruption which I have outlined above has developed since the Luangwa meeting.)
2. ETOSHA NATIONAL PARK — NAMI BIA (Population estimate 350)
Etosha lies within an incipient war zone and with the second largest coherent population of black rhino on the continent it is vulnerable. No immediate requirement for assistance for the international conservation community was identified.
3. SELOUS GAME RESERVE — TANZANIA (Population estimate 200?)
This was the top priority for rhino conservation five years ago. In ranking the Selous at the Luangwa meeting we worked on a population of 300 black rhino. Actions considered necessary were a review of the management of Selous, the provision of equipment and the establishment of a monitoring programme. Funding for a survey had already been secured.
4. HWANGE NATIONAL PARK — ZIMBABWE (Population estimate 200?)

Black rhino were re-introduced into this park in 1960 and more than 100 have been introduced from the Zambezi Valley over the last three years. It is one of the best protected parks in the country and no rhino poaching has been recorded. Immediate assistance is not required.

CHIRISA/CHIZARIRA — ZIMBABWE (Population estimate 350) These contiguous protected areas hold up to 400 black rhino in mostly rugged terrain. Poaching has not been a problem but the present forces are inadequate to counteract commercial poaching. The Zimbabwean authorities were urged to examine the situation carefully and take appropriate action. A small, mobile, well equipped anti-poaching unit established in the district could act as an early antidote to any commercial poaching in the complex comprising Chirisa, Chizarira, Chete and Matusadona (see below).

5. MATUSADONA NATIONAL PARK — ZIMBABWE (Population estimate 150).

The park borders on Lake Kariba and is not under poaching pressure at present. The services of a mobile anti-poaching unit may be needed as indicated above under Chirisa/Chizarira.

TSAVO NATIONAL PARK— KENYA (Population estimate 200?)

The Kenyan Rhino Conservation Strategy should be supported and law enforcement should be focussed on a priority area within Tsavo so that a wild population can be preserved.

LUANGWA VALLEY — ZAMBIA (Population estimate 120?)

Strong anti-poaching efforts combined with the involvement of local communities were identified as key requirements.

KAOKOLAND/DAMARALAND—NAMIBIA (Population estimate 70)

A population of approximately 70 black rhino live in desert and near desert conditions outside protected areas in Kaokoland and Damaraland. There is a need for additional support for patrols and possibly for the recruitment of additional auxiliaries who, drawn from the local communities, assist the authorities in patrolling the area.

6. KRUGER NATIONAL PARK—SOUTH AFRICA (Population estimate 120)

This growing population is one of the most secure in Africa and no immediate need for assistance is apparent.

MT KENYA NATIONAL PARK — KENYA (Population estimate 50)

There are presently no sound data on numbers and recommendations for action would need to be put forward once surveys have been completed.

ABERDARES NATIONAL PARK — KENYA (Population estimate 60)

A surveillance unit is operating in the area and no immediate action was identified.

CHETE SAFARI AREA — ZIMBABWE (Population estimate 60) See action under Chizarira/Chirisa above.

7. UMFOLOZI /HLULUWE GAME RESERVE— SOUTH AFRICA (Population estimate 200)

This complex is relatively well protected and requirements for future conservation action will be assessed in the conservation strategy that has recently been initiated in Natal.

8. GONAREZHOU NATIONAL PARK—ZIMBABWE (Population estimate 75)

Rhino were re-introduced to this park of 5 000 sq. km in 1971. The 72 animals introduced increased to over 100 but poaching over the last 18 months has reduced this to less than 75. Anti-poaching efforts are complicated by the Mocambique civil war and the movement of refugees through the park. Equipment and staffing could be improved.

9. MKUZI NATIONAL PARK — SOUTH AFRICA (Population estimate 70)

See comment under Umfolozi/Hluluwe above.

BOUBA-NJIDA NATIONAL PARK

— CAMEROON (Population estimate 50?)

The major requirement is to find out how many rhino remain in the park. (A recent report — November, 1986 — suggests that there

may no longer be any rhino in Bouba-Njida).

SOLIO RANCH— KENYA (Population estimate 90)

No clear recommendations for action on private ranches in Kenya emerged other than a need to investigate costs of fencing and fence maintenance.

10. LAIKIPIA RANCH — KENYA (Population estimate 40)

See above.

III. AERSG ACTION PLAN

The above recommendations on field action for black rhino constitute elaboration of components of the overall AERSG Action Plan, as outlined below. The priorities of the Action Plan were defined at the Victoria Falls Meeting of the AERSG held on the 21-22 September, 1985, and reviewed at the Luangwa meeting held on the 15-18 July 1986.

FIELD PRIORITIES

1. Develop a Conservation Strategy for the Black Rhino

The continuing rapid decline of black rhino populations in most parts of its range coupled with the fact that many viable populations do still exist in the wild merits the placing of black rhino, in contrast to white rhino, as the top priority for conservation action. The development of a continental conservation strategy for the species involves three major, and preferably concurrent, actions:

1.1 Examine the taxonomic status of presently described subspecies of black rhino so as to provide a sound basis for ordering priorities for action amongst the now geographically separated populations in Africa.

1.2 Develop National Conservation Plans for those countries with more than 100 black rhinos. Priorities for action would need to be examined once the results of the taxonomic studies were available and the national plans had been drafted (however, see above under Field Priorities for Action on Black Rhino).

1.3 Promote the dissemination of information and expertise necessary to implement and support the international and national rhino conservation plans.

2. Northern white rhino

2.1 Encourage efforts to coordinate the breeding of existing captive northern white rhino.

2.2 Examine the taxonomic status of the northern white rhino.

A key issue in deciding on the resources to be invested in the conservation of northern white rhino is the extent to which they have diverged from the southern white rhino populations. Further work on this question was needed.

2.3 Support the rehabilitation of Garamba National Park with northern white rhino as a component of the ecosystem.

3. Desert Elephant

Continue to monitor the status of elephant populations in Mali, Mauritania and Namibia and to urge appropriate conservation action.

4. Forest Elephant

4.1 The second phase of the study of forest elephant numbers and distribution (i.e. the classification and delineation of elephant habitats and land use strata) should be initiated as soon as possible. A sound knowledge of the size of the forest elephant population is crucial to decisions about the management of African elephant and the regulation of the ivory trade.

4.2 Protected areas for forest elephant need to be established.

5. West African Elephant

Convene a regional arm of the AERSG in West Africa and encourage a re-assessment of the status and distribution of elephant within West Africa.

6. Selous Game Reserve

A full census of the rhino and elephant populations of the Selous was needed urgently (this survey was carried out in October, 1986).

7. Central African Republic

Continue to support rhino and elephant conservation initiatives in the CAR despite recent major reductions in the populations of these species.

8. Other Surveys

Censuses of elephant and rhino populations are especially needed in Tsavo, Lunangwa, Kafue and Runaha/Rungwa.

TRADE PRIORITIES

1. Rhino Horn

1.1 North Yemen. Take action to reduce the demand for rhino horn and, if possible, close down the trade.

1.2 East Asia. Take action to reduce the demand for rhino horn and, if possible, stop the trade in horn.

1.3 Investigate the movement of rhino horn within Africa.

1.4 Investigate the discrepancies between reported declines in rhino populations and the amount of horn appearing in the trade.

1.5 Inform Governments of the value, and potential value, of their rhino populations and so encourage the allocation of more resources to their conservation.

RHINO POACHING IN THE ZAMBEZI VALLEY

Rhino poaching in the Zambezi Valley of Zimbabwe continues at a serious level, with staff of the Zimbabwean Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (assisted by units of the Police Support Unit) waging what amounts to counter-insurgency warfare against commercial rhino poachers. These poachers enter Zimbabwe from Zambia in groups of 4-6 men, armed with AK47 assault rifles and .375 hunting rifles, with their prime objective being the acquisition of rhino horn. They use sophisticated tactics to avoid capture by the Zimbabwean forces: e.g. anti-tracking, fire-and-movement drill, and co-ordinated operations along the Zambezi river frontage. Since June 1985, 19 poachers have been killed (the inmost recent death occurring in early December, 1986), and a further 10 have been captured. The latter have confirmed, during interrogations, that they carry military type weapons specifically to resist capture.

It is estimated that over 200 rhino have been slaughtered on the Zimbabwean side of the Zambezi since July 1984, and although the rate of loss has decreased in recent months (due partly to reduced densities of rhino along the river frontage), it is likely that poaching activity will increase during the rainy season. Officials of the Zimbabwean Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management are attempting to develop liaison with Zambian officials over the matter (the Zambian Commissioner of Police was recently fully briefed on the problem during a visit to Zimbabwe).

COVER PHOTOGRAPH (by A. Hall-Martin): Joao, a famous tusker of Kruger National Park. His left tusk measured 191 cm from lip to tip, and his right 165 cm; lip circumference of the left was 54 cm, and the right 55 cm. His shoulder height was 348 cm.

2. Ivory

2.1 Encourage the formation of a wildlife division within Interpol or if this is not feasible the formation of an equivalent organisation linking wildlife law enforcement agencies.

2.2 Investigate the internal trade in ivory and ivory products in central Africa (i.e. Zaire, Cameroun, CAR, Congo and Gabon).

2.3 Investigate the internal trade in ivory and ivory products in West Africa (i.e. from Senegal to Niger and Nigeria).

2.4 Continue the development of ivory and elephant population models as an aid to the interpretation of ivory trade statistics.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Promote the conservation and management of elephant populations in Africa by providing information and advice on:

1. Monitoring elephant populations
2. Management and harvesting
3. Legal and administrative frameworks
4. Law enforcement
5. Ivory trade

The main focus of conservation action for elephants in Africa has been on anti-poaching and on attempts to halt the ivory trade. While these may be the most appropriate actions in some cases there are many circumstances where positive management of elephant, as a valuable aesthetic and economic resource, may be more successful. African Governments and wildlife agencies need to be made more aware of the options available to them.

David Cumming

REFERENCE

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The Zambezi situation provides clear evidence of the high degree of criminal motivation associated with rhino poaching. Weak law-enforcement, mild penalties for poaching, adherence to traditional game-scouting approaches, and lack of attention to systematic intelligence work must be corrected if there is to be any hope for the survival of rhino in African wildlife areas.

Glen Tatham

AFRICAN RHINO WORKSHOP IN CINCINNATI, OCTOBER 1986

The American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria convened a 4-day meeting of rhino specialists (including a number of members of AERSG) in Cincinnati, to discuss the management of small populations of rhino in captive or semi-captive situations. Information was presented on a range of relevant topics, including rhino systematics, genetics, decision analysis, reproductive physiology and health problems. It is intended that the proceedings will be published as a special issue of *Pachyderm*.

The aim of *Pachyderm*, the AERSG Newsletter, is to offer members of the group, and those who share its concerns, brief research papers, news items and opinions on issues directly related to the conservation and management of elephant and rhino in Africa. All readers are invited to submit articles (up to 3 000 words), black and white photographs and graphics for publication; articles may be edited. Material published in *Pachyderm* does not necessarily reflect the views of AERSG, SSC, UCN or any organisation supporting AERSG.

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