



Black rhino with calf

Aberdare Rhino Sanctuary

This is one of the five rhino sanctuaries proposed by the Government of Kenya to be fenced and given special protection and management. The government requested the Rhino Ark to act as co-ordinator of this project and we are pleased to be able to report that the clearing of the fence line around the Salient of the Aberdare National Park is now complete and that fencing has commenced.

We have been monitoring rhinos in Damaraland for nearly ten years, and believe that we know enough of their habits to warrant the results of removing their horns. For example, past observations on rhinos in this arid habitat show the chance of harm from a confrontation is very slim; we have only one report of two young bulls sparring with horn clashes, and no intensive fighting or maiming has yet been recorded. Thus, if a dehorned rhino meets a horned one it is probable that the encounter will prove innocuous and, in any case, such an encounter is most unlikely as great care is taken that an entire group, with very limited interaction with other animals, be dehorned. Predators are few in Damaraland, and we hope that sheer bulk and the offensive attitude of, and noise made by, a rhino under attack would act as defence enough.

Concerning feeding habits, the vegetation in Damaraland is unusually short and within reach of rhinos at about shoulder height or less. In times of drought, it may be desirable to break branches, but short vegetation is always available.

Tourists have arrived already to see the dehorned rhinos; filmmakers can still take their pictures and, in fact, convey more effectively the desperate situation of the rhino by showing a dehorned animal. Rhino hide is worth little in comparison with the horn and certainly poachers, bearing in mind that the fines for poaching are extremely high, would not risk killing a hornless rhino for the skin alone.

If poachers cannot be prevented from killing for rhino horn, we believe that dehorning the animals, wherever and whenever necessary, will give a better chance of survival to the rhino.

Excerpts from Blythe Loutit's Save the Rhino Trust Fund Newsletter, June 1989, number 53. **Lucy Vigne**

The Rhino Ark, established some 18 months ago as a project of the David Sheldrick

Wildlife Trust, was only able to do this due to the encouraging financial assistance to the Project from various persons and companies in and outside Kenya as well as from major conservation organizations throughout the world. The major Conservation Donors have been WCI through the New York Zoological Society, WWF, the Eden Trust, Care for the Wild, United States AID and Friends of Africa in the United States. The pledges and donations to date are KShs. 6,000,000 (US\$ 300,000) and will be sufficient for the first phase which is a distance of 37 km around the Salient in which is located Treetops and The Ark, famous for their night game viewing facilities. The ambition is to fence the entire Aberdare National Park, a distance of some 220 km, and to enable us to assist the Kenya Government in realizing this many more funds are needed.

The establishment of a rhino sanctuary automatically protects elephants and any other wildlife and ecosystems which are included within the sanctuary.

The President of Kenya is determined to save the country's natural heritage for the benefit of future generations. The recent burning of millions of shillings worth of ivory which would have generated a vast amount of much needed foreign exchange is an example of their determination to rid the world of ivory and thus eliminate the selfish desires of poachers and their masters.

C.G.K. Kuhle