
SESSION TITLE: MANAGING ELEPHANTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE PROTECTED AREAS

Chair: Eric Edroma

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LAW ENFORCEMENT WITHIN PROTECTED AREAS

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SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION COMPILED FROM RAPPORTEUR NOTES

In southern Africa, elephants and rhinos occupy the same habitat. Therefore, joint security operations of the two species have been implemented under the auspices of the Rhino and Elephant Management Security committee. The committee's membership comprises representatives and owners, law enforcement officials and investigation officers, whose overall mission statement is to promote the security of rhinos and elephants in southern Africa.

The committee is at an advanced stage of seeking formal government approval for its operations, which follow a well elaborated "eight point counter-poaching model" detailing what has to be done when there

is a problem. The committee is also involved in seeking funds from non-governmental organisations for its activities and to train staff. The latter need is of major concern, with motivation of personnel being seen as crucial for achieving the security goals.

With regard to elephant poaching in southern Africa, the incidence of poaching has been low and sporadic except during the years 1981-1985 when a sharp increase was experienced. This period coincided with the demobilisation of over 70,000 troops in Mozambique and subsequent reports of marauding, armed "gangs" along the eastern border of Kruger National Park. Major training and anti-poaching operations were thus mounted and the situation had been contained by 1986. In contrast, whereas rhino-poaching mortalities were minimal in the 1980s, they have increased in the (post-CITES ban) period since 1989.

ELEPHANT TRANSLOCATIONS

Clem Coetsee

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SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION COMPILED FROM RAPPORTEUR NOTES*

*This presentation was accompanied by a video-taped film

The presentation focused on the techniques used for

the mass capture of elephants, which were first developed and tested in Zimbabwe in 1993. Additional trials have since taken place in South Africa and Kenya.

During 1993, 670 elephants in family units were moved from Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe. 470 of the elephants were translocated to large conservation areas within Zimbabwe and the remaining

200 were transported to the Madikwe Reserve in South Africa.

During the 1993 operation, a Hughes 300 helicopter was used to facilitate a search of the area in order to identify suitably-sized herds which could be moved with the available transport. Once selected, the elephants were ushered slowly, using the helicopter, towards an access road where the capture team was on standby with all the equipment. Darting commenced when the animals had moved to within a short distance of the ground team.

The matriarch, whenever possible, was the first in a herd to be darted, followed by any remaining adults. During the darting operation, the herd was guided continuously towards the road. The matriarch (being the first to be darted) was usually the first to “drop” and it was observed that the rest of the group stayed near her.

Of the 670 animals captured, 12 (1.8%) died. The main cause of mortality was suffocation by restriction of the trunk, either by an elephant falling on its own trunk or by another elephant lying on top of it.

Haloperidol (40 to 120mg depending on body size) was used as a tranquiliser during transport. In addition, Azaperone (50-200mg) was often administered to avoid aggression. Trilifon (100-300mg) was administered to keep the animals calm after their release into bomas.

The Zimbabwe exercise proved that elephant herds can be successfully captured and translocated over long distances. This technology gives wildlife managers an additional option for elephant management, although it may not replace culling entirely.