



THE MKOMAZI PROJE

Introduction

The hard work of planning and stocking both our endangered species programmes in the Mkomazi Game Reserve have now settled into the day to day running and establishment of procedures, safety and development. Civilisation is maintenance, and even if we are not quite civilised yet, with the amount of maintenance going on, we should be.

The politics of the wildlife conservation world would put a soap opera to shame, with the endless emphasis on seminars, conferences and research. When research grants, reputations and rivalries are in play, pure science often becomes a secondary consideration. This seems to sideline the fact that wildlife work is practical, arduous and takes place in the field. Rangers still die in the field protecting their country's natural resources, and economic *raison d'être*. Elephants and other animals still get poached and snared, domestic stock increases disproportionately to the amount of available grazing, and the local communities, aware of their neighbouring wildlife since time immemorial, become the subject of study in politically charged environments in quite another world. Meanwhile, the Tanzanian Government tries to implement policies which attempt to be both sustainable and fair and it is a tribute to a vast majority of people's general good nature and understanding that so much remains in good shape.



Rhino Sanctuary

Early in the year Tony left for Kenya and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, where one of the most successful rhino sanctuaries in Kenya is managed. Discussion there took place with Ian Craig and Fuzz Dyer on the possibility of sending groups of 2 or 3 guards in rota from Mkomazi Rhino to Lewa for training. Meanwhile the JCB and Caterpillar started work clearing the line for the new internal rhino sanctuary fence line, which will create a separate introduction area so the new rhino can be introduced without interference from the established population. This grants the newcomers the freedom to adapt, yet offers them some form of contact with the founder animals. Once they have settled, the internal fence can be used again for another internal introduction area or for extending the sanctuary. Wilson, who headed the team that built the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary fence line, came down to measure the new fence-line and new isolation compound and we started work on the arduous preparation of documents for importing the equipment. *Friends of Serengeti Switzerland* and *Save the Rhino International* generously donated the funds for this internal fence.

Dr Piet Morkel from *National Parks Board South Africa (NPBSA)* came up to replace the transmitters of the two male rhino (Jonah Oklahoma and James Small). It was decided not to replace the transmitters on the females, as they could be pregnant, although we are still kept guessing. We took advantage of a film crew from the *National History Unit* of South Africa who were filming here with their state-of-the-art helicopter, and whose pilot, Piet Otto, is a



longstanding game capture colleague of Dr Morkel. It was a smooth operation, albeit tense and dramatic, and the transmitters were successfully replaced. The thick vegetation and heavy rain made for hard work in pinning down, darting and following up the rhino, but we were fortunate to have quality expertise on hand on the ground. The sanctuary staff is now able to get an accurate location with the transmitters.

Jonah Oklahoma, Charlie and Rose spend much of the time together, and James remains alone. On some nights we have seen three rhino and even a leopard drinking at the water pans, and on one occasion we saw Rose kneeling at one of the water pans whilst the Bedford lorry carrying the water tanker filled the pan with water.

Dr Rob Brett from the *African Rhino Specialist Group* assessed the sanctuary for fundraising applications to *US Fish and Wildlife* and other organisations. The Trusts were delighted when *US F&W* agreed to fund the training of the

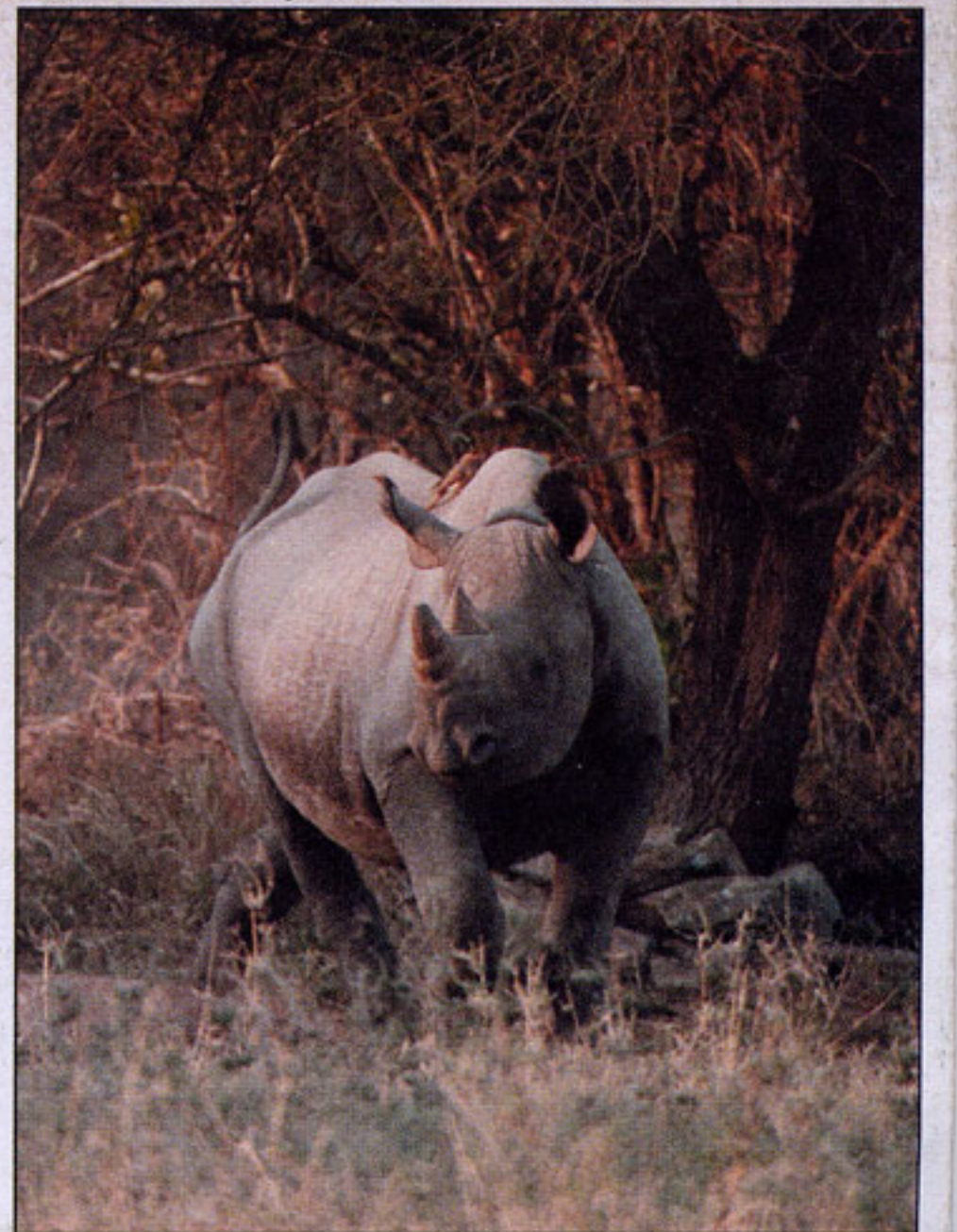
sanctuary security guards, as well as a selection of rangers from the Wildlife Division headquarters at Zange. Once all the security force have received training at Lewa it is hoped that they will travel to Tsavo National Park to have a look at the rhino sanctuary and re-release programme there.

US Fish & Wildlife also agreed to fund the purchase of binoculars and night optics which will improve the capability of sanctuary staff to monitor and identify rhinos at night at fixed points (e.g. waterholes).

Tony traveled to South Africa with the Chairman of our Tanzanian Trust, Brigadier General Hashim Mbita to meet with *NPBSA* for negotiations on the next translocation of rhino. The Chief Executive of *NPBSA*, Mavuso Msi'mang and Dr Hall Martin welcomed them both and it was concluded that two females (one with a male calf) plus one adult male will be translocated in mid 2000. The price is still high, but a small reduction was negotiated. The usual politics are involved, as many of the East African black rhino have been sold to a private dealer / rancher, but that's something that we are well used to.

The second committee meeting took place of the *Tanzanian Rhino Conservation Steering Group*. Tony was in the USA at the time so we were only able to submit a brief report. Mr. Matthew Maige, the Government Rhino Coordinator, chaired the meeting and presented the report on our behalf. Mr. Maige has also visited Mkomazi a few times over the past year and all the strategies, plans and procedures are plotted out in discussion with him.

The security force is working conscientiously on maintaining the disciplines and systems of the sanctuary, as well as undertaking the daily sightings. The fence maintenance gangs are operating well, and walk the 30-km fence line daily in relays checking the fence and signs of activity on the ground. Happily there have still not been any breakouts or break-ins and,



CT 1999 Newsletter

by Lucy Fitzjohn

alongside the security force and fence maintenance gangs, a sanctuary vehicle is continually on the move attending to duties. The security of the rhinos at Mkomazi has been maintained since their reintroduction in November 1997, through application of all standard criteria assessed in approval of rhino conservation areas in southern Africa.

A new water storage tank is being constructed to work as a back up to the dam. The dam has held

couple of changes took place with retirements of the old sanctuary guards and recruitment of two Wildlife Division rangers.

The first external foot patrol set off in October. This comprised of two men from the sanctuary, who patrolled for 4 days on a peripheral circuit around the sanctuary. These patrols form part of the extension of the sanctuary security. They were backed up by the aircraft with vehicle

but I will list a few by way of example and leave it for each Trust office to provide the complete lists if asked. The *Tanzanian Wildlife Fund* donated new uniports for the staff housing in the sanctuary. *Disney* and *Busch Gardens* remain committed to funding the sanctuary through the *International Rhino Foundation*.

Larry Freels donated a four-wheel bike and a Kawasaki Mule multipurpose sanctuary vehicle. TUSK donated considerable funds, some of which could be used for upgrading existing equipment and also for the purchase of new uniforms, beds and tents.

The board of directors of the USA Trust, alongside their own generous financial pledges to the project, planned heavy fundraising schedules for the rhino sanctuary and Tony undertook lengthy trips to the USA for these purposes which are reported later. But it is never easy, and the incoming funds are the result of many years of hard work, commitment and loyalty from a great many people. More significantly, the funds are often ring-fenced, which enables us to get projects up and running, yet we still have to find support for the day to day running of the whole project.



water for 18 months, since it was completed, and is holding up well. Tony felt that a further emergency water source was necessary, water being the perennial problem in Mkomazi. This new storage tank has the capacity for 75,000 gallons (341,250 litres). Filtration and treatment systems are also being installed. *Tanga Cement*, through Basil Hersov, agreed to donate 500 bags of cement for this project, which was a fantastic step forward and for which we are very grateful.

The 40-year-old Bedford lorry/water tanker moves slowly around the sanctuary on a regular basis, filling up the new water pans and tanks for both rhino and staff. The JCB has been working on reclearing and extending the firebreaks internally and externally, in preparation for this dry season. The grader has been widening the airstrip for the anticipated arrival of the next translocation of rhino. The grader also works on the sanctuary fence line, maintaining and clearing when necessary.

Tony held discussion with Dr Richard Leakey (then re-instated Director of the *Kenya Wildlife Services*) about the possibility of receiving two females from Kenya in the future. Further discussion will take place on this when Tony has pursued these ideas with the rhino coordinator, Mr. Maige, and they have both traveled together to visit the new director of wildlife of KWS, Nehemiah Rottich, a friend and an ex founder Trustee of the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust Kenya.

Brigadier Mbita and Elisaria held interviews for selection of new sanctuary personnel and a

resupplies and, with the Wildlife Division, were able to deter illegal activity and arrest perpetrators. These patrols will be sent out on a regular basis.

As noted earlier, we do know that the rhinos have been mating, and are hopeful that there will be a birth soon, but it is extremely difficult to tell if the females are pregnant, as it is a 16-month pregnancy.

There have been many donations to and support of the rhino project on so many different fronts,



African Hunting Dog

Captive Breeding and Translocation Programme

It has been a good year for this programme - the result of the success of the breeding and veterinary work that has taken place over the past four years. Much of the credit for this programme should go to the keepers of the dogs, Sangito and Ayubu, without whose understanding, commitment and care this programme would not be possible.

from one initial recommendation by an anonymous source to sell the dogs to zoos or destroy them (!), it was a success. The Tanzanian Government committed to their original aim and invitation to the Trust, to attempt to reintroduce these dogs into areas where they will have the best chance of success. The Wildlife Division subsequently started the process of putting together a policy on wild

The official report on the re-introduction programme in Tsavo National Park (which involved four males from the breeding programme here - see past reports) was published by Dr Richard Kock of the *Kenya Wildlife Services*, his colleagues, *WWF* and Tony. In summary, Dr Kock was positive about the reintroduction attempt, and the lessons that have been learnt for future attempts. The Trust's concerns on some disappointments of the early stages of the *KWS* programme were also published.

Roger Burrows, who has studied packs of wild dogs in the Serengeti for over three years, visited and spent time looking at the behaviour and demography of the captive dogs in comparison with those in the wild. Given the constrictions of their compounds, much of their behaviour was on a parallel with wild roaming dogs, and discussion took place on aspects of their reintroduction in relation to a captive upbringing and its consequences. Probably one of the most knowledgeable men in East Africa on the behaviour, distribution and problems with the wild dogs, it was a privilege to have him here.

The wild dogs that will be selected for reintroduction are, for the majority, those who would have naturally left the original packs. The decision on pack composition will be made by Dr Visee, Tony and Roger Burrows, depending on the area that the dogs will go to.

Despite the pressure of numbers, there has been no fighting - just the usual jostling to determine and maintain hierarchy and the pup mortality - yet likewise there is no apathy in any of the packs in each compound. It underscores the inherent civilised behaviour of these animals towards each other, even under such space constrictions.



The dogs continue to breed. The alpha females in three of the four compounds had sets of pups. Not all of these survived, but the Trust's policy remains to interfere as little as possible in the breeding packs or with the mothers' capacity to raise their own litters. Diseased pups are only treated when it is possible to separate them, treat them and replace them immediately, or when they can be treated as a group with oral medication.

Presently, aside from the original founder group, there are three sets of two-year-olds, one set of yearlings, two sets of new pups, and one pregnant female.

We prepared a budget for running this programme for the next three years, including a reintroduction budget, and the *Ray Rowe Trust*, which has sponsored the project from inception, agreed to fund 50% of it.

Dr Aart Visee, the Chairman of *GAWPT* Holland, and the veterinary advisor to the project, visited on two occasions to continue the veterinary programme and preparation of the 1998 vet report. This report will be available from Trust offices in February 2000. Prof. Osterhaus of the *Erasmus University* in Rotterdam continued to supply the distemper vaccines and to perform antibody testing.

In April 99 we were invited to attend a Wild Dog Workshop in Same. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, the Wildlife Division, the Tanzanian Wildlife Research Institute, Tanzania National Parks, Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, Mkomazi Game Reserve management and ourselves. The meeting was to determine the future of the wild dogs currently breeding at Kisima, and, apart

dogs and the basics of this reintroduction programme were started. *IUCN* guidelines are being consulted, as well as data and published papers relevant to this programme.

We are grateful to all the Tanzanian members for their support. Significantly, the Government agreed to accept the constraints of a reintroduction programme such as this (which has had only partial success in other areas in southern Africa) and to carry on trying, whilst simultaneously keeping the breeding programme on line as a back up.



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Mkomazi Game Reserve Outreach Programme

We heard rumours in January 99 that the President of Tanzania had conducted his own internal investigation into the forced departure of Harrie and Truus Simons from the country had been conducted at the highest level and had concluded that this was merely a clash of personalities. We have not yet seen evidence of this conclusion in writing, and heard in March that Harrie and Truus, having re-established their lives in Holland, had decided not to return to Tanzania for many valid reasons, although they would visit regularly. This is a great loss to the people of Kisiwani, who made several trips to Dar es Salaam to press for an investigation, whilst Brigadier Mbita and our District Commissioner also pursued this matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

A judgement was reached on the pastoralist case against the Government of Tanzania for compensation and reinstatement of grazing permits in Mkomazi. David Anstey, the warden who gazetted the reserve in 1951, gave expert testimony on behalf of the Government. Sadly, he was brought in only once the case had reached the defense. The pastoralists were evidently disappointed with the result and took the judgement to the high court of appeal, where the number of plaintiffs to receive compensation was actually reduced. Now that the case is over, amicable relations have resumed with the leader of the Kisiwani pastoralist group and meetings have been scheduled over the next few months for assistance with their long-term development. This work formed part of the original aim of the outreach programme, but some of the pastoralists had left the programme, encouraged by overseas groups to pursue great financial claims by taking the Government of Tanzania to court.

The Masai Government Ward Secretary of Engassumet and Ruvu visited us in September and he and Tony held a meeting with this pastoralist leader on many relevant issues.

There is still an ongoing process to challenge and appraise the papers that were produced about Mkomazi, the Wildlife Division and even the Trust during this time. A lengthy task which Government is now taking more seriously, as the proliferation of unproved hypotheses quoted as fact, conjecture, deliberate bias and archival reference quoted to suit the bias has alerted Government to the swift passage of the information super-highway.

In September 99, the Honorable Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Mrs. Zakia Meghji, officially opened the Kisiwani Secondary School. She was accompanied by Brigadier Mbita representing the Trust, the Regional Administrative Secretary, representatives from the Wildlife Division (including Matthew Maige and the new Project Manager Mr. Lusasi), the Ministry of Education, the District Commissioners, representatives from the District Council, the headmaster and teachers of the school, the village leaders and hundreds of villagers and the local police.

The construction (by Lucas Tarimo) of the main body of the school was financed in the majority



by the Dutch Trust, in a joint cooperative effort with the District Council, the Ministry of Education, the Wildlife Division and the Kisiwani Ward. We were all pleased to be involved in the opening ceremony, most significantly together with our Minister as representatives from the world of wildlife preservation. Both the Minister and the Brigadier stressed the critical importance of secondary education, and mutual cooperation and friendship between those working in the game reserve and those living on the borders. One of the main themes of the Minister's speech was "animals or people - surely there is room for both". The Minister volunteered to hand back the draft management plan on Mkomazi Game Reserve to the village leaders for their further comments, owing to objections that have been raised over its' contents.

The headmaster of the secondary school approached the Trust to fund the refitting of windows and burglar bars for one of the classrooms which is to be used as a computer room. He had received a donation of the computers from another organisation, and the Trust agreed to fund the security.

Mr. Lusasi, the new Mkomazi Game Reserve Project Manager, is now working down in the Umba area of the reserve and has agreed to help the Kivingo Secondary School in Lushoto District. This secondary school needs refurbishing and Mr. Lusasi and the Trust have

agreed to supply cement and galvanised iron sheets.

The dam that the Trust has built at Kisima (with the help of the *International School* and *Tanga Cement*) has filled up. The concrete dam wall was constructed in order to flood small valley in between two existing wet season water sources. This water source supplies the rhino sanctuary personnel and rhino water pans, as well as base camp personnel. The dam has now held water for nearly two years and significantly also acts as an alternative water source for elephant and buffalo thereby eliminating their impact on the local communities' agricultural developments and water sources on the southern border of Mkomazi Game Reserve. This elimination of conflict has had a positive feed back from the local people. The village elders have advised us that for the first time in 40 years, they have not had to contend with elephant and buffalo in their farms and water sources.

This will lead to similar projects being undertaken in the reserve to assist both the animals and the local people, as part of the community conservation policy of the Wildlife Division. We heard that *US Fish and Wildlife* may have agreed to fund desilting of other dams in the reserve to help the elephant populations and thereby relieve the pressure on the local people.

