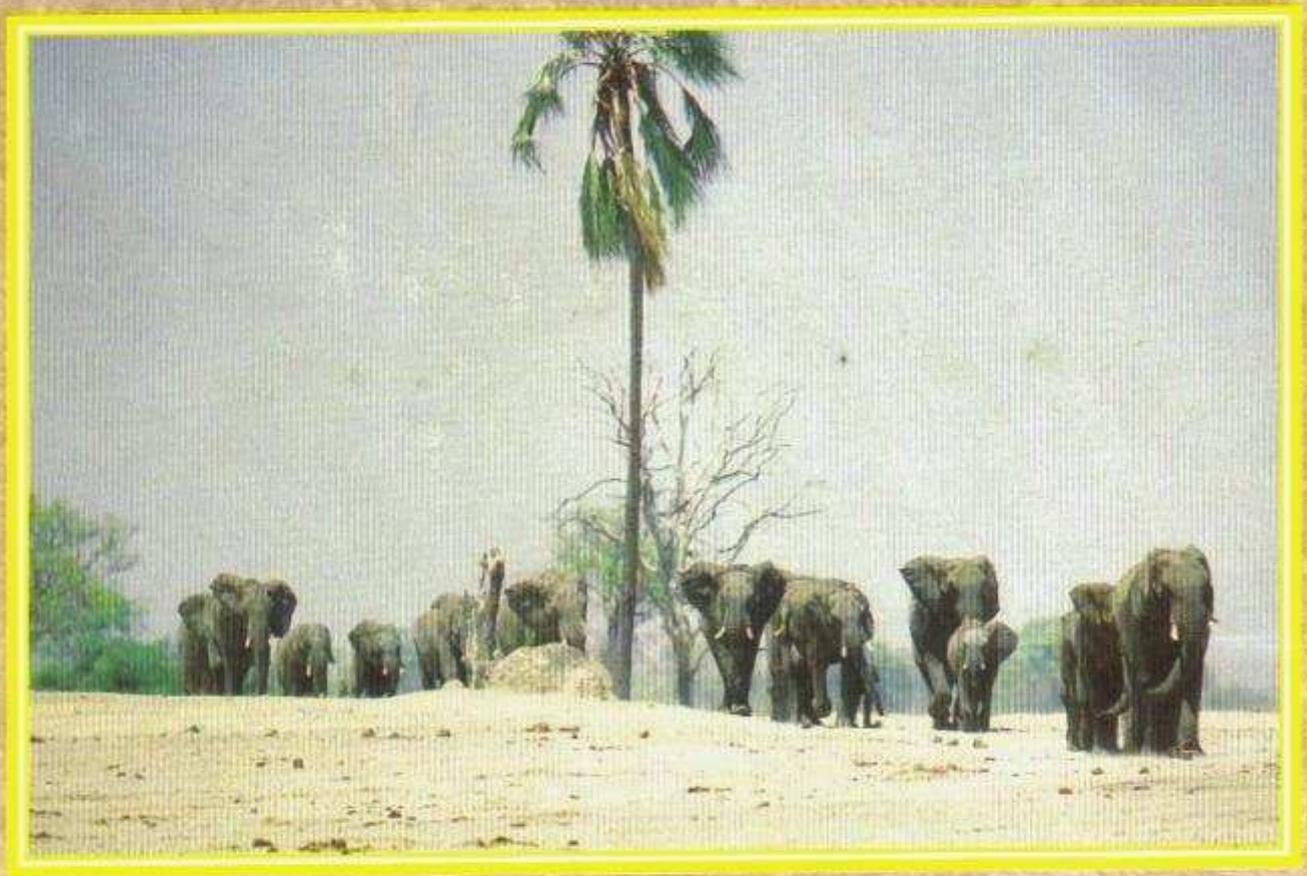


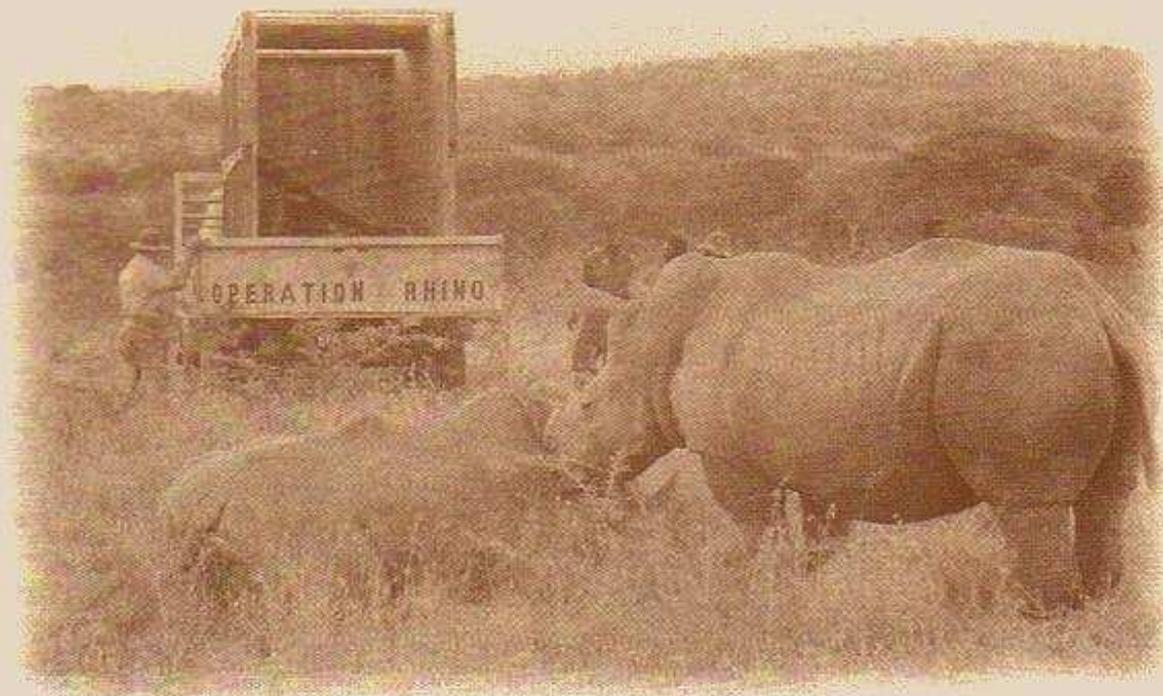
TED DAVISON

WANKIE

The Story of A Great Game Reserve



New Updated 3rd Impression
Introduction by Dr. John Hanks.
Afterword by Keith Meadows.



Operation Rhino, August 1962. Led by Ted Davison, a combined team of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation personnel brought eight white rhino from Natal, South Africa to Southern Rhodesia - thereby re-introducing to the region a species that had become locally extinct.

(photos courtesy Davison Family collection)



A rare picture of white and black rhino together, clearly showing different facial and mouth characteristics.

(photo courtesy Davison Family collection)

OPERATION WHITE RHINO
THE IMPORTATION OF EIGHT
SQUARE-LIPPED RHINOCEROS
(CERATOTHERIUM SIMUM)

J B Condy, Veterinary Research Laboratory
and

E Davison, Department of National Parks,
Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia

The Square-lipped Rhinoceros, the largest land mammal in the world after the elephant, was to be found in Central Africa from the earliest times. A pre-historic rock painting in the Matopos National Park is almost certainly of a white rhinoceros, judging from the length and shape of its skull.

Selous (1881, 1893) Le Roux (1925) Coryndon (1894) Nicholls (1892) and others, record that white rhinoceros were common up to 1890 in Matabeleland, Mashonaland and Gazaland, but from that date there was a rapid decline in their population and by 1900 only a few stragglers remained. There is no accurate record of when the last one was shot, but was probably about 1925 (Williamson 1962).

In August, 1962 eight white rhinoceros were imported into Southern Rhodesia from the Umfolosi Game Reserve, Natal. Four of these animals (1 male and 3 females) were released in the Matopos National Park, and four (2 male and 2 females) were released in the Kyle Dam Game Reserve. This importation of a rare animal to an environment where they had occurred previously is a historic event in the annals of wild life conservation, and as it entailed a 1,200 mile journey overland, over 5 days and 4 nights, the longest land journey to which this species has ever been subjected, a report on the journey and how the animals behaved is worthy of record.

The convoy assembled at Beit Bridge at mid-day on the 3rd, August, four lorries and one Land Rover having started from Salisbury and travelled via Fort Victoria and four lorries and one Land Rover and a water trailer had started from Bulawayo.

Staff with the exercise consisted of:-

Assistant Director of National Parks, Mr E Davison, in charge.

Veterinary Surgeon, Mr J Condy, from the Veterinary Research Dept.

Senior Game Ranger, Mr R Fothergill, Wild Life Conservation Dept.

Game Ranger T Orford, Wild Life Conservation Dept.

Parks Warden J Hatton, National Parks Dept.

Mechanic Mr A Smith, C.M.E.D.

12 African drivers and 6 lorry attendants as under:-

Department of National Parks

Romigius	Sandisa	Fuyata	Simoni	Pawuli
Keyi	Nqilinga	Muliviyeli	Samson	Mafinita

Department of Wild Life Conservation

Mapfumo	Albertino	Langton	Muskiwa	Teguru
Tasiana	Manwere	Kusaya		

Three members of the team, Mr Condy, Mr Fothergill and Mr Orford preceded the convoy by four days in order to gain more knowledge of the handling of the White Rhino before the return journey started, which was scheduled for the 9th August.

The Route chosen from Umfolosi to Rhodesia was not that originally planned. Due to heavy rains and the bad conditions of all Zululand roads, it was necessary to keep to main roads, and details of the Journey are given in Table 1.

Capture and pre-journey treatment

The animals were caught by the staff of Umfolosi Game Reserve using the technique described by Harthoorn (1962). A projectile syringe with a standard immobilising dose of 3 grammes "Themalon", (diethylthiambutane) 100 milligrams Hyoscine hydrobromide and 14 cc "Largactil" (Chlorpromazine hydrochloride) in all animals.

The white rhinoceros appears to be a very much more sensitive, and probably a more intelligent creature than the black rhinoceros. After capture a great deal of persuasion is necessary before they will eat either taff hay or lucerne in their pens, and it is often necessary for a human to

remain with them constantly for the first 3-4 days. Some will only eat when offered hay in the hand, and if the attendant stops talking to the animals and moves away, the rhino will stop eating. Some will not eat hay for several days, and to ensure their not starving, a gruel consisting of maize meal, glucose, condensed milk, molasses, salt and sugar has been devised by staff of the Umfolosi Game Reserve. Most of these temperamental animals take readily to this gruel, and within a few days are eating hay.

The reluctance on the part of most white rhinoceros to take readily to pen feeding is very noticeable, compared with the experiences gained on Lake Kariba with black rhinoceros. The latter have been known to eat lucerne hay within 6 hours of being captured, and no cases have occurred, that animals have refused food for more than 12 hours.

From previous experiences, in stocking other game parks and reserves in the Republic of South Africa, it has been found that white rhinoceros if captured, moved immediately to their new environment and released, will settle down to grazing natural pastures without any trouble. The long journey to Rhodesia, however, necessitated only transporting animals which had been accustomed to pen feeding, which is essential if they are to be treated for any length of time.

For at least a week before the journey commenced, the rhinoceros had been fed and watered in their crates which were tied to the entrance of the pans. They became quite accustomed to entering and even sleeping in these crates. At least twenty-four hours before leaving Umfolosi, each rhinoceros had been confined to their respective crates, and the latter were finally loaded so the animals' heads faced the rear end of the vehicle.

Method of Travel

Eleven vehicles comprised the convoy. Each rhinoceros was carried on a five ton diesel truck, and three Land Rovers equipped with two-way radio, transported the staff of veterinary surgeon, game rangers and mechanic.

The rhinoceros were transported in stout wooden crates reinforced by metal bands. These crates were of two different patterns. The most recent and best design by the Umfolosi Game Reserve staff was a crate with three doors at each end. These comprised, in addition to the common type of stable door, another door one foot high which gave access to

the bottom of the crate. Through this, feeding, watering and cleaning were carried out with ease.

Canvas sails were secured over the entire front and half on the top of the crates, an opening of 42" x 30" over each animal's head being left open at all times.

From the commencement of the journey a careful watch was kept on all animals. After having travelled the first 20 miles, some were noticed to be lying down and some were standing and eating, obviously quite at ease.

At various times of both day and night the animals were observed while the trucks were in motion. At no time did they appear restless, and various individuals were often to be seen standing and eating, even at midday.

Adequate ventilation of the crates was ensured all the time, and during the hard frost in Pietermaritzburg, the open portion on the top of the crate over each rhinoceros's head was not covered over. At one stage the tarpaulin of one crate was rolled forward to leave an opening on the top of the crate at the end near the cab of the truck. There appeared to be no advantage in doing this, dust particles were noticed to be almost stationary in this opening while the vehicle was in motion.

Feeding

During daylight travel the convoy stopped at least once per day for refuelling and other business. At all stops, an attendant saw that there was fodder available to the animals. By this time individual preferences were known, some only ate taff hay, some ate taff and lucerne hay.

Table II shows records of feeding habits of two males and two females, while the trucks were actually in motion. It will be seen that three ate both during morning and afternoon travel, while one, Ngazana, never ate while the trucks were in motion in day time. He was seen once, at 8.30 pm on the 3rd day of travel, to be eating oat hay while laying down.

Watering was carried out in plastic baths, and although they were given access to water both morning and evening, it was observed that most animals drank more in the evening, some not consuming any water in the morning. One animal, Mashayezonke, had taken an intense dislike to the plastic bath, and would only drink water off the floor of its crate.

Weather conditions varied from a frost during the first night at Pietermaritzburg, to very warm weather while crossing the Northern Transvaal. During the night of frost, it appeared from observations on the respirations and general behaviour, that no time were they distressed. No rain occurred during the journey, and the change in altitude from sea level to \pm 6,000 feet appeared to have no effect on the animals.

Veterinary Treatments

Tranquillisation was carefully considered. Two animals Mashayazonke and Chiarna were nervous and had fought their pens, the former breaking her anterior horn off. The two were therefore given 300 mgms each of Chlorpromazine an hour before the journey commenced. As they appeared settled later in the day, no further tranquillisers were administered. It was decided to interfere with nature as little as possible, and only treat when necessary. All the remaining six animals appeared at ease throughout the journey and no further tranquillisation was necessary.

Nyoni and Mashayazonke both had large suppurating lesions due to a previous infection on the skin. Both had courses of Penicillin before the journey. Nyoni was therefore given 2.5 gms oxytetracycline daily for the first two days of travel, and Mashayazonke was given the same treatment during the last two days of travel. Their skin lesions were dressed twice daily, with a Sulphanilamide-iodoform powder.

The serum of one female (the only animal it was possible to obtain serum from) was subjected to the routine agglutination test for Brucellosis, and found to be negative. Recently two Black Rhinoceros from Lake Kariba have shown positive reactions to this test.

On arriving at the Kyle Game Reserve the 4 rhinoceros had abrasions on the backs which were treated with wound dressing powder. These abrasions were apparently due to a shortage of bedding.

Examination of the faeces of all animals, revealed moderate to heavy infestations of nematodes. Bot fly larvae of the genus *Gyrostigma* are known to occur in White Rhinoceros at Umfolosi. As these eight rhinoceros being imported to Rhodesia were to be released in an area where rhino (and their parasites) had not occurred for many years, an opportunity arose to try to reduce their parasite burden to below the critical level necessary for their survival.

Accordingly they were all dosed with an anthelmintic very successfully, the detailed results of which are being published elsewhere.

All eight animals received 1000 units of vitamin B12 before being released.

The Umfolosi Game Reserve and surrounding country had been a Trypanosomiasis area up to 1950. As all the eight rhinoceros concerned were under four years old, it was considered unnecessary to use a trypanocidal drug.

Release

After having been in their crates for eight days, journey's end arrived on 3rd September. The trucks carrying the crates were reversed into pits at the entrance to the pens, and after securing the crates to these entrances, the sores and abrasions on all animals were treated before release.

The reactions of most of the animals was to enter the pens after a preliminary sniff. Umfaan, however, refused to leave his crate for nine hours after the door was removed.

At varying times after arrival in Rhodesia they were treated with an anthelmintic, and on 21st September the four at the Matopos National Park were the first group to be finally released from their pens into an enclosure of 250 acres in the 2,000 acre Game Park section. Within an hour of release they were grazing the natural pastures. They established their "territory" which was a relatively small one of their own choice, not extending more than half a mile from the pens, and returned daily to the pens to feed on taff hay, sleeping in the same place every day. They made no attempt to wander until the first rains brought on a flush of new grass. When this happened they explored the whole area of the fenced game camp.

At the Kyle Dam Game Reserve an usually dense and dry mat of natural pasture, in places four foot high, constituted a fire hazard which endangered the lives of all animals. The rainy season was not far off, so the four rhinoceros were retained in their pens until the first rain fell.

Conclusion - From the success of Operation White Rhino - Southern Rhodesia, it must be concluded that with reasonable care, these animals can be transported over very long distances by land. Apart from supplying ample bedding to prevent abrasions, it is difficult to recommend any

improvements on the method of crating, feeding, watering and transport.

In view of the apparently fairly high level of internal parasitism of white rhinoceros in their natural habitat at Umfolosi, it would be a wise precaution to treat all rhinoceros that are captured in this reserve, against internal and external parasites, before they are removed to other areas.

The white rhinoceros was to be found in most areas of Southern Rhodesia during the last century, and was even very common in some parts up till 1890. There is no reason to believe why they should not do very well in the two game parks where the eight were released in September 1962.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the considerable assistance and advice of Ian Player and members of the staff of Umfolosi Game Reserve.

The Natal Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board, the Durban City Police, Natal Provincial Police, Royal Agricultural Society of Natal, Andrews Motel Fort Mistake, the Immigration and Customs Officials of both Republic of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, they were most helpful and it took the whole convoy only a little over an hour to pass both Immigration posts, and the B.S.A. Police are to be thanked for their assistance in helping to make a smooth passage for the convoy.

The C.M.E.D. who supplied the vehicles and made available Mr A Smith a mechanic with a light service vehicle. Mr Smith did very valuable work and thanks to his services not one of the lorries with a rhino on board experienced mechanical trouble.

R Fothergill, T Orford and J Hatton are thanked for assisting in collecting information en route.

The costs of capturing the animals and the transport were defrayed by Public subscription.

Caltex (Africa) Ltd., are to be thanked for supplying all fuel for the convoy, and Pfizer Central Africa (Pvt) Ltd;., for supplies of Terramycin.

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27th November 1962

Wanke, The Story of a Great Game Reserve by Ted Davison was sent to www.stoprhinopoaching.com by his son, John Davison. In an e-mail to us John writes:

Could the web site use scans of pages from my father's autobiography book "**Wankie - The Story of a Great Game Reserve**"?

That book contains a full technical paper (7.5 pages) written by my father and Dr John Condy the Vet who came down from the then Southern Rhodesia to take the eight rhino back to Zimbabwe from Imfulosi. This paper covers only the first, historic translocation but other convoys came down to Imfulosi at various times after 1962 until 1967 by which time 74 White Rhino had been translocated to various parks in Zimbabwe - part of Ian Player's tactic to spread the gene pool worldwide as he seemed to have some premonition of the problems these creatures face today that went beyond mere concern for the carrying capacity of Imfulosi in ecological terms!

My father was in charge of the first vehicle convoy that came to Imfulosi in 1962 to collect eight White Rhino from Ian Player's team to take back to Kyle and Matopas Parks in Zimbabwe. The species had been regionally extinct for some 90 years in Zimbabwe before that convoy trundled back over Beit Bridge having been plentiful up there in Selous days.

**The rhino conservation efforts made by the various personalities here in Natal and in Rhodesia
cannot be sold down the drain today!**

**Maybe some of this history will motive the current day staff to go the extra mile in dealing with the current
poaching pandemic!**

John Davison
(Registered Wildlife Guide)
Wildlife Experiences
Pinetown-Durban-South Africa
Telephone 27(0)317001497 mobile 0834550165

Thank you John for sharing your father's book with us.