

RHINOS, POACHING & CONSERVATION

—by Peter Hammond



Rhinoceroses were close to extinction in the early 1990s, but two decades of painstaking conservation efforts succeeded in increasing the population of rhinos in Africa, from fewer than 2 500 in 1992, to over 24 000 by 2010. Now a sharp increase in poaching of rhinos is threatening to reverse decades of conservation efforts and plunge rhinos back into decline and the threat of extinc-

The third most lucrative crime
The drastic surge in rhino poaching is being driven by an insane demand in Asia for rhino horn. In Vietnam and China, people are willing to pay thousands of dollars for just a sliver of it. Rhino horn is considered a miracle drug and an aphrodisiac and although there is no scientific evidence to support this bizarre belief, rhino horn can

Rhino poaching is now listed as the third most lucrative criminal trade in the world – behind drugs and human trafficking. Well-equipped, sophisticated organised crime syndicates, using helicopters and automatic weapons, are ruthlessly targeting rhinos throughout Southern Africa.

War on wildlife
As South Africa is home to most of the world's rhino population, this war against organised crime is mostly being fought in our game parks. Of the 20 000 white rhino in the world, 19 000 are in South Africa. 12 000 of those are in Kruger National Park. In 2010, Kruger National Park lost 146 of its rhino to poachers and far more in 2011. As the Kruger National Park has a 186 mile open border with Mozambique, it is partic-

ularly vulnerable to poachers. South Africa is home to 1600 black rhino. The white rhino get their name from a mispronunciation for wide as a description of their lip; they weigh as much as three tonnes. Black rhino weigh up to 1.5 tonnes.

Shockingly in 2011, 448 rhino were killed for their horns, 333 of those were in South Africa. Rhino poaching has increased 400%

rhino hunting licences - all this despite being out of jail, on R1 million bail!

Stewardship over Creation
In the first chapter of the Bible, God made mankind responsible for His animals (Gen 1:28). All animals are God's animals (Psalm 50:10). We are answerable to God for our treatment, care and protection of

ing to what he has done, whether good or bad." 2 Cor 5:10

How are we to treat animals?
We have a responsibility as Christians to speak up and to do what we can to steward the earth well. "A good man is kind to his animals, but the wicked are cruel to theirs." Prov 12:10

Matthew Henry's commentary on Proverbs 12:10: "He regards even the life of his beast, not only because it is his servant, but because it is God's creature. The animals that are under our care must be provided for, must have convenient food and rest, and must in no case be abused or tyrannised over. Balaam was checked for beating his donkey. The Lord took care of oxen. Those therefore are unrighteous men that »

"How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished." Jer 12:4

tion. In the last three years over 800 rhino have been killed, most of those in South Africa.

fetch \$22 000 per kilo on the black market. Rhino poaching is now a R150 billion industry annually.

In the light of the clear teaching of Scripture concerning creation, and mankind's responsibility for it, we should treat animals with love and concern.

in the last 10 years. A professional hunter, arrested in 2010 for poaching and trading in rhino horn, has since been issued 12 new

them. "For we must all appear before the Judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, accord-



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THE RHINO

Pre-historic throw back; majestic, proud, aloof,
This Ceratomorpha; giant beast on cloven hoof,
Extinct now, like the Dodo, because of human sin,
A hunger for filthy lucre; no 'fear of God' within.

Men void of fear of recompense...murderers and
thieves. Robbed now of the Rhino and the gaping
hole it leaves; Mankind's will to rape the land, to
farm and till the sod, His gifts long forgotten, placed
in the Ark by God,

Land for God's creation grows smaller by the day,
Hunters, trappers, poachers simply scythe away,
No conscience to kill a Rhino, for just a single horn,
Leaving it's young dead, mere weeks since it was born.

What further low can man sink to, on this ever sinful
earth, We seldom see God's beauty, but only see
its worth. A day of reckoning is coming, mankind
please be warned, Judged on how we loved, and
God's great gifts we spawned.

Extracted from 'Sounds of Distant Drums' poems by Christian
poet Alfred Sandison Hutchison. info@obadiahoutreach.org

are not just
to the brute creatures. Those
who are furious and barba-
rous to them evidence and
confirm in themselves a
habit of barbarity, and
make the creation groan."

Save the rhino

Conservationists recommend that
to save the rhino and win this war
against organised crime, there
needs to be far greater co-opera-
tion between wildlife organisa-
tions, police, prosecutors, magis-
trates and judges. New technolo-
gies need to be developed to det-
ect and intercept rhino poachers

used by poachers.

The Parabats should be as-
signed to hunt down poachers in game
reserves. The Reconnaissance Commando
should be tasked to track down and deal
with the organised crime syndicates be-
hind the poachers. As with piracy, history
proves that when dealing with ruthless
criminals only the most decisive and sus-
tained action can prevail.

**We must recognise that the welfare and
protection of animals is an essential part
of our Christian responsibility.**



and horn traffickers, including
DNA fingerprinting of rhino horn, track-
ing devices, improved conviction rates,
increased severe penalties for rhino re-
lated poaching crimes, and no bail for rhino
poachers.

Mobilise against poachers

In addition to these measures,
I would recommend that as
this is a war against organ-
ised crime, the military be
brought in. The Air Force
should assign aircraft to as-
sist Wildlife Protection Ser-
vices to intercept helicopters

Duty and delight

In the light of the clear teaching of Scrip-
ture concerning Creation, and mankind's
responsibility for it, we should treat ani-
mals with the love and concern of those
who must give an account of our conduct
to God. We must do all that we can to se-
cure the well-being of all animals who,
with ourselves, inhabit the earth and so
fulfil the creative joy and purposes of Al-
mighty God. Please keep this situation in
your prayers. ■

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