

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE ARRIVAL OF THREE BLACK RHINOS IN TANZANIA

On Friday 29th May, the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust took delivery at Mkomazi in Tanzania, of the three black rhino from the Dvur Kralove Zoo in the Czech Republic.

The whole translocation was planned with the Dvur Kralove Zoo, GAWPT, Back to Africa, the Tanzanian Government and the Suzuki Rhino Club. Dr Dana Holeckova, the Director of Dvur Kralove, worked in close consultation with Dr Peter Morkel, Dr Hamish Currie, Tony, the Director of Wildlife, the Director of TANAPA and Ted van Dam to get this project off the ground. Ted and Catrien van Dam, through the Suzuki Rhino Club of The Netherlands made it a reality. Through their efforts we were able to undertake this massive translocation and also they enabled us to hire a Martin Air cargo 747 at a very good rate to fly the rhinos to Tanzania. We are very grateful to Bernard Mchomvu, Save the Rhino, Chester Zoo, Frankfurt Zoo, Grumeti Reserves, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and the Ministry of Finance for supporting this translocation with advice, assistance and logistical back up.

Leading Rhino expert Dr Pete Morkel did an amazing job as always.

The rhinos were crate-trained for 2 months with their own keeper, Honza, and also with Berry White from the UK. Pete Morkel visited on two occasions to start the long process of preparing the rhino for being shut into their crates and for the huge journey ahead.

They were crated at Dvur Kralove at 2pm on the Wednesday afternoon. They then were driven through the night for 1,000 km to Schipol Airport, Amsterdam. Pete Morkel, Berry White and Honza, were with them. They then rested for the day at Schipol in a privately set-aside hangar. Ted van Dam joined the team at Schipol. They loaded that night and flew through the night to Kilimanjaro Airport. The Martin Air agent, VCK, advised us that the aircraft would arrive at 07.20 in the morning and it touched down at Kilimanjaro at 07.23. We had pre-cleared them as much as was physically possible, so from the door of the aircraft opening, off-loading them from the plane, to loading them up on the awaiting trucks and the trucks departing from Kilimanjaro Airport - the timing was 1 hour and 5 minutes.



Two of the black Rhinos, Jabu and Deborah. Mkomazi 2009

Grumeti Reserves and Frankfurt Zoological Society had loaned us their four crane transport trucks and Tony met with the drivers on the day before the rhino arrival to go through practise runs. Everyone at Kilimanjaro Airport, most especially Swissport, were incredibly helpful and committed. Their efficiency in helping off-load the rhinos from the plane, load them onto the transport trucks and clear them into Tanzania in one hour is proof of their professionalism.

At the airport, there was a small waiting committee, including Dr Dana Holeckova, the Deputy British High Commissioner and his wife - Tony and Marketa Brennan, Dr Hamish Currie of Back to Africa, TANAPA Director of Conservation, Edward Kishe, TANAPA Ecology Manager, Mr Lejora and TANAPA's Mr Hando, as well as Dr Titus Mlengeya, TANAPA's Chief Vet, and Dr Christine Geiger from Frankfurt Zoo. Senior Kenya Wildlife Service's Warden Mark Cheruyiot attended, along with Dr Nick de Souza of WSPA and Catrien van Dam. An English film crew (Cheetah TV) and the Tanzanian press recording the event.

The trucks set off and arrived at Mkomazi at lunch time. The Director of Wildlife - Erasmus Tarimo, the Director General of National Parks - Gerald Bigarube, the Chairman of National Parks - Mr Lilungulu, had flown in for the day. Brigadier Gen. Hashim Mbita and Rose Lugembe, our Tanzanian Trustees, and many other VIPs were there.

The first male, Jamie, did not come out of his crate at the Mkomazi bomas for about an hour. Small groups took it in turn to leave the boma area and grab some lunch and by the time everyone had eaten, Pete, Tony, Berry, our Tanzanian personnel, the other vets and the Dvur Kralove personnel had off-loaded the other two, Deborah and Jabu. Brigadier Mbita then made a speech welcoming the black rhino back to Tanzania and thanking all the parties involved.



Jabu and Deborah. Mkomazi 2009

They are now settling. We are fortunate enough to have two keepers with them, Berry and the Dvur Kralove keeper Honza. Pete Morkel is here with 2 other TANAPA vets and Dr Geiger who have been assigned to him for capacity building. Dr Hamish Currie is also here. Transmitters will be implanted into their horns next week.

The day to day management and security of the Rhino Sanctuary is made possible through the supporters of GAWPT. We are extremely grateful to you all.

- George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust

29th May 2009