

Sebakwe News

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www.blackrhino.org

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Boreholes For Midlands Schools

On my recent visit I was delighted to see that the borehole for Pauldale School and the borehole for Rockvale School had been successfully completed and both were working well. This means that the children of both schools and the new secondary school will now have fresh clean water to drink.

An opening ceremony had been arranged at Pauldale School and attended by all the school children, their teachers and some Army and National Parks Staff.



Many speeches were made, school pen pal letters were exchanged and I was then asked to cut the white ribbon and to throw over a bunch of leaves as *lobola* for good luck and wishing that the borehole would never run out of water.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *lobola* is a name used amongst African people for a bride price or traditionally paid for cattle (like luck money). I was not offered a bride or any cattle, but instead after the ceremony an enjoyable lunch had been prepared for us.



Rhino Workshops in Harare

Three rhino workshops were arranged in March at the Bronte Hotel in Harare in order to implement a strategic planning process for rhino conservation in Zimbabwe.

Since 2007 poaching has escalated throughout Zimbabwe and has resulted in major losses of both species of rhino throughout the country. The upsurge in poaching has been aggravated by the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe over the past decade, and has created serious problems of biological viability of some populations. At the end of 2010 there were 431 black rhino and 290 white rhino in Zimbabwe.

The first workshop was focused on security aspects, the second focused on biological management and the third worked up a new national strategy for the next five years to ensure a long term increase in the population of Zimbabwean rhino.

Consideration should be given to the potential danger of keeping the majority of endangered wildlife species in one area of the country – where they may be at risk from natural disasters such as the effects of climate change, floods, earthquakes, drought, forest fires and disease as well as man-made disasters such as loss of habitat, nuclear radiation and civil uprisings.



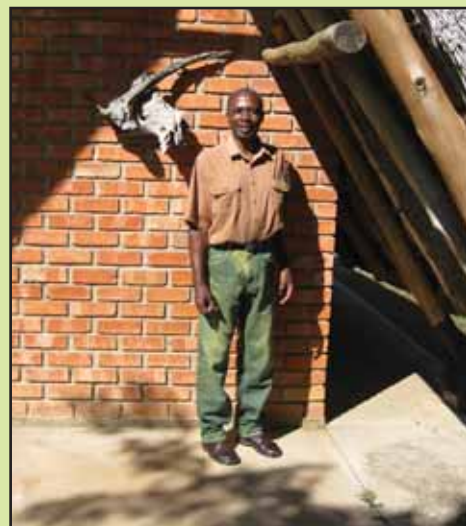
Sebawke Conservation and Education Centre

Palloma Pachiti has now been appointed Director of the Education Centre.

Many congratulations to Palloma on the birth of her boy called Aedene (The Fiery One)



Daniel Dongo has been appointed Assistant Director of the Education Centre. Daniel is aged 45 years. He has 15 years of experience of wildlife management and six years experience of environmental education. He is excited by the wilderness experience and is looking forward to a lasting relationship with the Centre.



Our Recent Visit by Alastair Neale

I was lucky enough in November to be able to go back out to Sebakwe with my daughter Rosie who stayed on for a month; I had a much shorter but nevertheless eventful time. The journey did not start too well as we were unable to land in Nairobi to catch the connecting plane - so were delayed for 24 hours in Kenya. We were mighty glad to see Linda Strydom waiting for us at Harare airport. My few days in Sebakwe were therefore shorter but I managed to do and see a great deal.

Just before I returned home I joined the interview panel in Harare to appoint a new head of the education centre and I was delighted when we could offer Palloma the post and I know that she has some fantastic ideas for the future.

Zimbabwe as ever was full of contradictions and I left confused but totally enchanted by it all, the countryside was stunning, the Flamboyant trees were in full blossom and were breath taking. In the conservancy the animals we saw were just fantastic, sable, zebra, giraffe, wildebeest, waterbuck and kudu all looking healthy, the schools full of children singing and dancing but behind this all there is still real hardship, hunger and a sense of fear. Shortly there will be more elections and this brings a great sense of trepidation for all. When I visit I always do not know what I will be faced with on my return but I am always humbled and enthused by the great work that goes on with everything connected with the charity to work as hard as I can to enable the charity to keep doing all the great work that it does .



During my visit I was able to see the borehole at Pauldale School which had recently been completed and after some minor adjustments the water is now flowing. The engineer was also going to mend the original borehole in Pauldale village which will mean that our hole is only used by the school children and teachers. We also planned where the hole for Rockvale was to be sited and Rosie was able to see the borehole being drilled. The free supply of water is a huge benefit to the children, schools and community and we are already seeing benefits. With the water and help from the education centre, villagers are now growing different crops and are very proud of their vegetable gardens. They are very grateful for all the support and with more fund-raising we can try to add to the two boreholes already generously provided.



A Busy Day in the Life of Dave Strydom by Alastair Neale

I was lucky enough to spend a day out in the field with David which was a real eye opener as I had not quite realised what a diverse and varied experience this was to be.

Our first job was to go out into the bush to see if we could find the rhino, the purpose of this was to inspect the younger female as there had been concerns that she was being bullied by the two males and therefore not eating. Fresh bales of alfalfa had been put out so we went to see if the rhino had eaten them. As the shrubs were just beginning to sprout however the rhino had not touched the bales and were elsewhere. In the bush I was shown some delightful and intricate fauna and flora such as the velvet spider, a rare wood bee and the Spin Drift Flower. We stumbled across a baby warthog looking for its mother which we reunited. We also came across a local woman who travels from village to village. She was alone in the bush and we gave her a lift back to a village for a meal, evidently she has a learning difficulty but the community look after her but do not allow her to stay in any particular village.



We went on to inspect the mines and the miners village, sadly mining is a huge threat in the area and now individual miners are being encouraged to enter the area and dig for chromium. They leave huge scars in the area and the rocks have to be transported by large lorries. The miners are poor and understandably take any work going but they are putting the environment at risk and may well be eating the poached meat. We inspected their small settlement and looked at the old fires for evidence of illegal bones but none were found. Mining is a real threat to the rhino and the whole community now.



We then went to visit one of the farms to look at the new herd of pigs, the farm was also supplying many of the chickens to eat in the area. The chickens looked well and healthy but the pigs needed some attention and David was able to offer some much needed advice. We also picked up a huge python skin. The python had been poached and the skin had been left to be handed in. I was shocked by the size of the skin and had underestimated how big the local snakes really were. We visited another farm which is restarting its tobacco crop. David introduced himself to the new manager and we were able to discuss the Trust, the rhino, the role of the guards and the poaching that has been going on in the area.

On the way home we had a puncture, met some villagers and were told of a lion that had only just killed a young cow, there has been a lion in the area recently causing significant problems as it is taking out livestock but may also present a real risk to the locals and I thought about the children who walk to school daily. As an outsider the idea of a lion on the loose seemed very exciting but for the locals it is a real danger. Only a few weeks ago a camper had been killed by a lion in Mana Pools.

I thought that the day had been exciting and quite exhausting as it was but on the way back we heard on the radio that two children had possibly been abducted and we were very near to the scene, we had to form a road block and then found the children's father and interviewed him. The children were missing for 24 hours and we were really concerned about them. We heard of stories that some of the children are being abducted and sold; it was another reminder for me of how hard it is for everyone in Zimbabwe just now to keep going. Happily this story had a happy ending as the children were found exhausted and lost in the bush - but safe. David had had a vital role to play in this affair talking to police organising the search parties and keeping everyone calm.

Once back at David and Linda's we relaxed and talked through the day and had a much welcomed beer.

VOLUNTEERS IN MIDLANDS CONSERVANCY

Volunteer tourists and conservation workers can now experience a working vacation in the Midlands Black Rhino Conservancy in Zimbabwe.

They will be accommodated by Linda and Dave Strydom and will spend part of their time tracking wildlife in the bush with Dave and part with Palloma at the Education Centre and visiting the Schools.

Volunteers will be encouraged to come for a minimum of two weeks at a cost for the package of £675.00 per person per week. This will cover meals, accommodation and transport to and from the airport but not the cost of air flights to Harare or the entry visa.

If you are interested please contact John or Annie Gripper on +44 (0)1993 830278

My Time in Sebakwe by Rosie Neale

In November 2010 I was lucky enough to be able to travel to Sebakwe and see for myself how the charity is helping the local area and schools. I was able to visit three of the schools the charity supports and help out at the sponsored camp at the education centre. Having been involved with fund raising for it, I was very keen to see where the money goes

The children attending the camp were in an environmental club from Chiodza Primary School. They were interested and wanted to learn about the Black Rhino and how the charity tackles poaching. They had a talk on the Black Rhino and deforestation in the area. The centre is using education as a tool to teach children how to preserve life in their local area for generations to come.

The children also had time to perform songs and poems that they had prepared. The centre provided great food and accommodation and the children were very excited because many of them had not slept in a bed before. Chiodza is a very poor area and it does not have clean water, I heard how difficult this was. The staff had wanted the school to have a garden but because of their water situation this was not possible.

The next day I went to the education centre where the children learnt more about the local animals and we drew them. We performed some more songs, the children love singing and dancing, they were very skilled, energetic and it was a very moving experience. After that there was time to do face painting, I had brought some with me and the children really enjoyed this as they had not had it done before. Every child wanted their face painted. At the end of the camp there was a presentation where some of the best students were given a prize for example a ball or skipping rope and every child was given a pen and a pencil. They were very pleased with their presents.



The first school I visited was Sebakwe Primary School. It is only a five minute walk from the education centre. The school has around 120 pupils aged between 5 to 12 years old. The school is very run down and many of the class rooms do not have tables and the children have to write on their laps. The school is under equipped and has a lack of teaching resources which makes it hard for both teachers and students. We had a tour around the school and the nearby health centre which was very interesting.

We then visited Rockvale Primary school. This was about a 10 minute drive from the education centre. The school children seemed very excited by our visit and prepared an assembly for us. They sang and presented poems; even some of the parents came to watch and greeted us. The school has three classrooms but four classes, therefore one class is held outside, I could not help thinking back to my school days and how different this was.



We visited the gardens where the villagers grow their food. The garden was built as a reward after one of the students noticed that they cooked on fires outside, the student knew that it would be more beneficial to cook inside using less energy. The normal fires used lots of wood. This student designed a stove that had two walls requiring the wood used to be cut into small pieces. The garden was built to encourage the women to cook inside their houses and only use the wood that was needed. The women are very thankful for their garden and look after it well. It now provides them with lots of vegetables and a more varied diet.



The next school we went to visit was called Gutsaruzhinji primary school, the local secondary school was also using this site because it had been burnt down recently and is to be rebuilt. The school has been greatly helped by the charity and most of the onsite building work has been finished - the only thing left to do is put a roof on one of the buildings.

The school also has a good water supply now which has been provided by the charity. The children sang for us and presented some of their work. I had a look at many of the class books which were very interesting.

Because of the lack of learning and teaching resources many of the children are not learning at the same level as British children, but have a greater knowledge in other more practical subjects. We sat and listened to a class learn about environmentally friendly ways of farming crops and animals and the children knew a lot about this. The school has plans to create a garden similar to the women's garden so that they can produce lots of food for the community.

The younger children were being taught in the teachers living accommodation because there was not enough space in the other buildings. The school is not big enough to cope with the amount of children in the local area.

The secondary school was using the building that did not have a roof on it and the teacher said when it rains that the children are very cramped because everyone has to squash into a small building. This as you can imagine can make it very hard to teach. Today there were only 10 pupils in the secondary school and I was told that because of lack of funds many students could not afford to stay in school and many drop out to help their family.

I had a great trip and learnt a lot about the charity and Sebakwe. It is a great place and I am planning to go back one day and see how things have changed and I made many friends in such a short time. The charity does a great job and helps many families, schools, and of course the animals. The way in which the charity helps the rhino the children and the community and runs the extraordinary education centre is amazing. I also had some wonderful moments with David and Linda Strydom who looked after me so well and showed some remarkable things, I managed to see a rhino, swam in the lake (avoiding crocodiles), met many amazing characters and the experience will stay with me for ever. I would urge everyone to do all they can to support the Trust.

Please Help Us !!!

Adopting a rhino cost just £30 for two years and is an excellent Birthday or Wedding present for your friends or relations. Our Website (www.blackrhino.org) has a full list and display of pictures of the rhinos for adoption.

Membership, Adoption, Quiz, Scholarship & Donations form

Tick	Amount £	
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership	- £25
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Membership	- £15
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior Membership (12 years and below)	- £5
<input type="checkbox"/> Adoption Donation	- £30
<input type="checkbox"/> Scholarship Fund	- £
<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz	- £
<input type="checkbox"/> Schools Water Project	- £
<input type="checkbox"/> General donations	- £

PLEASE PRINT

Name.....

Address.....

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Postcode.....

Tel:.....

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Total enclosed £

Completed forms to be returned to:-

**Annie Gripper
 Manor Farm
 Ascott under Wychwood
 OXON
 OX7 6AL**

Cheques - Please make payable to SBRT

Visa/Mastercard

Card Number

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Valid From

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Expires End

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CV2 No (last 3 digits on rear)

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Tel: +44 (0)1993 830 278

Fax: +44 (0)1993 830 395

Signature.....

Address of Adopter:-

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Post Code.....

From.....

Tel:.....

Name of Adopter for certificate.....Special date (if required).....

Please sign the following form so that we can reclaim 28% GIFT AID tax relief.

I am a UK taxpayer and want the Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust to treat all donations I have made since 6th April 2000 and all donations that I make from the date of this declaration, unless I notify you otherwise, as gift donations.

Signature.....

Date.....