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THE ENDANGERED SPECIES UPDATE



THIS ISSUE

*Welcome
Plight of the Rhino
Covid Impact*

DECLINE OF THE RHINO POPULATION

The numbers are devastating. Recent statistics out of The Kruger National Park indicate a population reduction of 67% for white rhinos – from 10,621 in 2011 to 3,529 today; and 35% for black rhinos – from 415 in 2013 to 268 today.

Source: [African Geographic](#)

RAY DEARLOVE

- Founder of [The Australian Rhino Project](#)
- Formal Strategic Adviser to the [Wildlife Conservation Network Rhino Fund](#)
- Partner of the [Community Conservation Fund of Africa](#) www.ccfa.africa
- Partner of the [Wildlife Protection Program](#)
- Partner and sponsor of the [Black Mambas](#) Bush Babies initiative
- Supporter and sponsor of the [Klaserie Nature Reserve Foundation](#)

WELCOME TO THE LAUNCH OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES UPDATE

As many of you would know, I am unashamedly an advocate for the five remaining species of rhino in the world, but there are many, many more animals under threat through poaching for illegal commercial use, habitat loss, human encroachment and the hunting for bushmeat – the latter mainly because of poverty and hunger.

The intention of this newsletter, which I plan to issue on a regular basis, is to shine a light on the plight of many of these animals - not only in Africa. I was particularly moved to write this update after reading about the latest Rhino statistics which indicate a huge reduction in the numbers of white and black rhinos in South Africa's Kruger National Park, historically a safe haven for the world's remaining rhinos.

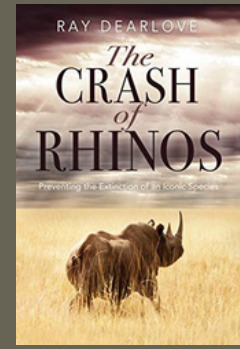
With the world's attention focused on the Covid-19 pandemic, the ongoing threat of poaching to some of the planet's most iconic animals has pretty much gone off the radar. I believe there is an urgent need to keep spreading the awareness of this crisis. While we all hope that the various vaccines being developed and distributed around the world will bring the management of the coronavirus under control, there is no such silver bullet for defenseless animals including the rhino.

Whilst the focus of this inaugural newsletter will be on the plight of the rhino, a cause which is very dear to my heart, it is a little-known statistic that Australia has the worst mammal extinction rate of any country in the world. The catastrophic bushfires of 2019-20 impacted nearly 3 billion animals and have pushed many more of Australia's precious wildlife on the fast-track towards extinction. Over 500 of Australia's wildlife species are at risk of being erased forever, including the greater glider, black-flanked rock-wallaby, regent honeyeater, swift parrot and even Australia's iconic koala. (Source: [WWF Australia](#)).



THE PLIGHT OF THE RHINO

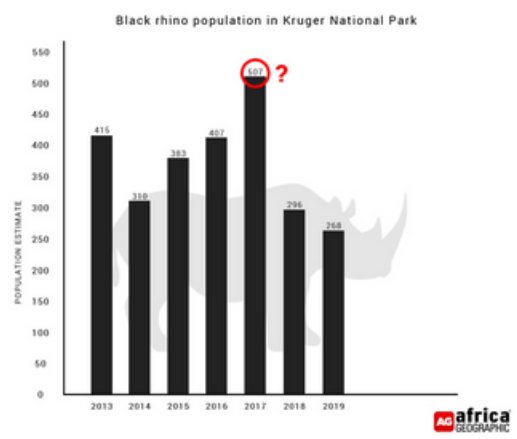
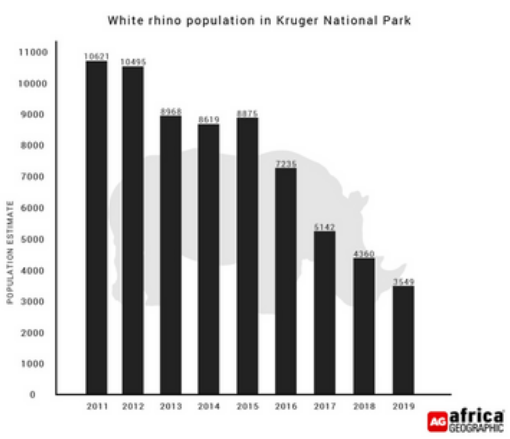
CRASH OF RHINOS



After years of silence about Kruger National Park rhino populations from South Africa's Ministry of Forestry and Fisheries and Environmental Affairs, we can now confirm that populations in the Kruger National Park have plummeted to an estimated 3,529 white rhinos and 268 black rhinos.

Recent Government updates claimed progress in the war against poaching on the grounds that the volume of rhinos being poached per year has reduced. This population update however suggests that the reduction in numbers itself is a significant factor contributing towards lower poaching volumes as they are more difficult to find.

The Crash of Rhinos is a book I wrote and published last year. The title is a play on words; a 'crash' being the collective noun for rhinos, but it also describes the carnage wrought by poachers in Africa who have slaughtered more than 10,000 rhinos – three a day – in the past decade to feed the seemingly insatiable demand for rhino horn in some Asian countries. The book tells the story of the creation and the progress of The Australian Rhino Project which plans on bringing rhinos from Africa to Australia to keep them safe and, hopefully, prevent them from becoming extinct.



2017 figure appears to be a statistical anomaly that cannot be explained.

In the late 1890s, the southern white rhino almost became globally extinct as a species. Thanks to people like Dr Ian Player, a tiny remnant population of fewer than 100 of these animals in IMfolozi Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal was saved and gradually multiplied to restock other parks in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent.

It remains my view that reported rhino poaching numbers tend to underestimate the actual number of deaths because of the difficulty of finding carcasses in dense bush over such a large area.

The number of rhino cows killed by poachers had a knock-on effect on overall population levels as this often led to the death of dependent calves and the future loss of calves that a rhino cow would have produced. "This effect equates to an additional five rhinos lost to the population per loss of one cow, now and in the future." Poaching also led to social disruption of predominantly black rhino families as cows began to conceive less often. [Read the full article here - Kruger rhino populations plummet - latest official stats - Africa Geographic.](#) My thanks to Simon Espley of Africa Geographic and Tony Carnie, environment journalist for the details and text above.

All proceeds of the sale of the book go towards supporting the [Black Mambas](#), an all-female anti-poaching unit.

Founded in 2013 by Transfrontier Africa NPC it now protects all boundaries of the 62,000ha Balule Nature Reserve, part of the Greater Kruger Area in South Africa. The 23 young rangers and 7 Environmental Monitors who make up the anti-poaching unit, want their communities to understand that rhino conservation is better than than poaching, addressing the social and moral decay that is a product of the rhino poaching within their communities.

Crash of Rhinos can be found on:
[Booktopia](#)
[Amazon](#)



A POEM

I wrote this poem in March 2020 which I think sums up the coronavirus situation quite well.

COVID 19 - SYDNEY 2020

As we sit in not so splendid
isolation
Our days and nights subsumed
by the dreaded virus
Confined to our homes and fear
across the nation
Learning some harsh lessons,
it's not all about us

We yearn for the peace of the
bush and all
We dream of the freedom of
travel
We long for the fish eagle's call
When will this situation
unravel?

Then we pause for a while and
consider our circumstance
We have a home, a freezer,
power and light
What of those less fortunate,
do they have any chance?
Each day is about survival, now
stop and consider their plight

Our healthcare is world class,
our doctors and nurses the best
The speed and intensity of this
virus puts all to the test
Consider the poor, the
homeless and the lonely
No power, no doctors, no clean
water, death may come slowly

So as this terrible disease takes
its awful toll
Nobody is spared, but mostly
the frail and the old
There is no other place in the
world that I would rather be
But on this special island that
is girt by sea

Ray Dearlove

THE COVID IMPACT



The Coronavirus pandemic, Covid-19, has rocked the world. At present, the source or cause of the virus is not exactly known but there is a powerful school of thought that the virus originated in the live wildlife markets in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

There seems to be further agreement that bats and pangolins are involved. Pangolins have the unwanted reputation of being the most illegally trafficked mammals in the world. They are poached mainly for their scales, which are believed to treat a variety of health conditions in traditional Chinese medicine, and also as a luxury food throughout Asia. Seemingly one or more unsuspecting families in Wuhan have consumed infected pangolin scales with catastrophic global consequences.

The Wildlife Conservation Society is quoted as saying, "Poorly regulated, live-animal markets mixed with the illegal wildlife trade offer a unique opportunity for viruses to spill over from wildlife hosts into the human population." In the case of SARS, bats were the original hosts. The bats then infected other animals, which transmitted the disease to humans.

The Wuhan market was closed in January 2020 and soon after, China announced a temporary national ban on the buying, selling, and transportation of wild animals in markets, restaurants, and online marketplaces across the country. This ban later became permanent. Shortly thereafter, Vietnam imposed a similar ban of the trading of wildlife and, as expected, there was universal joy amongst conservationists since this was a significant policy change.

I have a slightly different view – I am excited but remain suspicious and believe that the effectiveness of the bans will be entirely dependent on the ongoing political will to enforce them.

Correctly identifying the source of Covid-19 is critically important for many obvious reasons but, from a conservation point of view, it is a double-edged sword; if the live markets are found to be where the virus originated, one hopes that the Chinese, and other Asian countries' authorities will enforce the ban of trading of wildlife. However, if the source is elsewhere, it is likely that the live markets will be allowed to recommence trading in live animals, in dead animals and also wildlife body parts.

Either way, the sad truth is that the demand for rhino horn, lion and tiger bones and penises and hippo teeth will not go away overnight. Bans will simply shift the trade underground and inevitably, the price paid by the many willing users will increase.



IN SUMMARY



I HOPE THAT THIS INAUGURAL UPDATE HAS BEEN OF INTEREST TO YOU

We are living in challenging and, in many ways, unprecedented times, and we are rightly focused on the health of ourselves, our families, our friends and our neighbours.

In Africa, every single lodge, as part of the Covid national lock-downs, was closed and all tourists were required to exit all wildlife areas. What this meant is that all of these tourists' eyes and ears covering the network of roads in the parks such as the Kruger National Park (KNP) disappeared and, to all intents and purposes, the Park was deserted.

In the KNP there is only one ranger for approximately 50 square kilometres, meaning that about 400 rangers try and protect approximately 20,000 square kilometres of wilderness, including a porous border with Mozambique of approximately 160km. It is almost impossible to effectively protect such wild areas.

We just cannot allow the poachers and international crime syndicates to continue doing what they do without keeping the pressure on governments to educate and feed their people and bring the criminals to justice. As Dr Jane Goodall DBE says. "What will future generations think of us when they look back and rhinos are only in a picture book?"

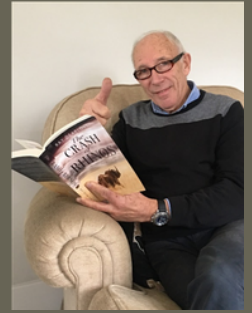
If you and your family have any plans for African safaris, gap years at rhino orphanages or other conservation destinations, I would love to assist you - advice is free!

My intention is not to give you solely bad news, the message being that wildlife is worth more alive than dead.

I hope that this [baby elephant throwing a tantrum](#) brings as smile to your day.



PHIL LIGGETT



One of the most recognisable voices in the world in the war against Rhino poaching is that of the "voice of cycling", Phil Liggett MBE, seen reading my book, *The Crash of Rhinos*. Phil and his wife Trish, a speed skating Olympian, were instrumental in establishing the not for profit Helping Rhinos and have been incredibly supportive of my attempts to increase the awareness of the plight of rhinos.

CRASH OF RHINOS BOOK REVIEW

One reviewer described the book as, "An insightful, frustrating, humorous and humbling story that will make you laugh, cry and tear your hair out in exasperation."

FOREWORDS

Dame Jane Goodall and George Gregan AM have kindly written forewords for *The Crash of Rhinos*

FEEDBACK

I welcome any comments and suggestions about the [Endangered Species Update](#) newsletter. Drop me a line to start a conversation or unsubscribe: ray@rhinoray.com.au

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