



# BHEJANE TRUST ZIMBABWE

Sinamatella Intensive Protection Zone

The **BHEJANE TRUST** is supported by and **HUNTERS AND GUIDES AFRICA**, the current concession outfitters, with our Zimbabwe partners HHK Safaris, of the Deka Safari Area. Hunters and Guides has made a sizable contributions to the Black Rhino Conservation effort within the Sinamatella IPZ. Dr Mark Bristow, avid hunter and conservationist has through generous financial donations supported the Trust and their antipoaching team, for a number of years, in addition to financing several strategic solar powered water points. Hunters and Guides Africa continues, by example to promote **Conservation through Hunting**.

### Black Rhino in the Deka Safari Area.

The Deka Safari Area is part of the Sinamatella Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ), which was setup in the 1990's for the protection of its Black Rhino, which were translocated in from threatened populations in the Zambezi Valley. Within the Deka Safari Area there are several areas that were particularly favoured by rhino, with the rhino moving between the Safari area and the Park. The rhino are particularly attracted to a couple of year round springs in the DSA. All these areas are still used by rhino and are patrolled year round by Parks Rangers specifically to protect them.

### Bhejane Trust

Bhejane Trust (Bhejane means Black Rhino in the local Ndebele language) has been active at Sinamatella since 2009. It started out as a dedicated rhino monitoring organisation, partnering the SAVE the African Rhino Foundation but Bhejane has also taken on many other tasks within the IPZ due to financial constraints of Parks. They are now responsible for game water management, and assist Parks with transport, food for rangers on patrol, wildlife population monitoring and assistance and advice of all kinds as required.

### Anti-poaching

Combating the poachers within the Sinamatella IPZ is extremely difficult. The Park and the Safari Area are not fenced and this area covers nearly 2000 square kilometers. The Parks and Wildlife Authority is in a desperately **poor financial state** and there is only enough manpower for a coverage of around one, two-man ranger team per 175 square kilometers. Parks are also hampered by vehicle shortages, and lack of suitable patrol equipment, along with the manpower shortages. The Sinamatella IPZ has been declared an Intensive Protection Zone which means the rangers can open fire on suspected armed poachers without warning – a necessity as the poachers come in heavily armed. Over the years several poachers have been killed or injured in contacts with Parks, but the rewards of rhino horn or ivory are great enough that they still come, necessitating constant vigilance and patrolling by Parks with the support of Bhejane Trust.

Until recently, dehorning of the rhino in the IPZ was carried out to reduce their value to the poachers. However the success of this dehorning exercise is subject to much debate as the exercise is traumatic for the animal and poachers will kill for the value in the stump.

Ultimately, successful rhino conservation relies on one essential resource, **dedicated and motivated manpower**. These dedicated men in the field however require support and encouragement, a role carried out by the **Bhejane Trust**, but the Trust can only do this with support from donors

#### Plans for the future of Sinamatella's rhino.

Sinamatella's rhino population has fallen to the point that it is no longer a viable breeding population. Some other populations of rhino in Zimbabwe have also reached that point but others have grown enough to exceed their environmental carrying capacity. As a result, there are a number of non-productive rhino within the country in need of a safe breeding environment. **Bhejane Trust** has proposed the building of a secure, fenced, **Rhino Conservation Area** (RCA) within the Sinamatella IPZ, where a breeding population could be kept, with young animals either being released into the IPZ when they reach adult-hood or retained in an expanded RCA. The RCA concept has the full support of Parks, who will be partners in this endeavour to save the threatened or non viable rhino populations in other Parks, and we will launch this endeavour in 2017

Currently, Bhejane has a dedicated **Rhino Monitoring Unit**. The unit will, in the near future, be equipped with a drone to improve its ability to locate both rhino and poachers. If the development of the RCA takes place, the unit would continue to monitor and protect the remaining free-ranging rhino in the IPZ but would also take on security duties in the RCA.

#### The Gurangwenya solar pump and Noeleens Pan.

We have recently installed a solar pump at **Gurangwenya and Noeleen's Pan** in the **Deka Safari Area** with funding from Dr Mark Bristow. This pump will supply water to many species but it also has two specific links with rhino conservation.....

1. The Gurangwenya area has long been a transit corridor for rhino between the Kwizizi and Mbala rivers but until now, it has been without water in the dry season. The new pump will make it easier for rhino (and other species) to move through the area but will also allow them to become resident for part of the time.
2. The proposed RCA will unfortunately create a barrier to movement of animals, especially elephants, between the Smiths Mine Hills and Kashawe Spring. We have installed a pump at Mashambo Pan on the north-western side of the proposed RCA, Gurangwenya pump is on the south- eastern side. Between them, these two pumps should be able to make up for the difficulty elephants will have in accessing Kashawe Spring from the north (though it will remain fully accessible from all other directions).

#### Other endangered species in the Deka Safari Area

##### **1. Painted dogs(African Wild Dogs).**

Two packs of Painted Dogs have large parts of their territories in the Deka Safari Area. The Gurangwenya Pack ranges from Sinamatella to Mbala Gate and beyond, regularly hunting along the Mbala River. In 2016 they raised twelve pups. There is a third pack, as yet unnamed, that has territory centred on Tshakabika Hot Spring in the Park but hunts through Macheji in the Deka Safari Area.

##### **2. Vultures.** Bhejane Trust has been monitoring vulture nesting activity since 2013. We have found three loose colonies of White-backed Vultures nesting in the Deka Safari Area. The Kwizizi/Mambane colony is one of the largest in the IPZ and there are smaller groups at Ambere and Guyu.

##### **3. Cheetah.** Cheetah are rare in Sinamatella but in the Deka Safari Area we have recent sightings from Macheji and Gurangwenya.

*Needless to say in order to keep the momentum of this highly commendable conservation effort going considerable funding is needed. At the current rate a minimum of \$175,000 is annually required to cover overhead before additional projects can be undertaken.*

*It is hoped that those of us that are hunter conservationists and who understand wild animals and the value of wildlife and in particular those species under serious threat such as the Sinamatella/Deka Black Rhino will assist where ever possible as HUNTERS FOR CONSERVATION TRUST CONTACT AND BANK DETAIL.*

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