



RHINO

'On 4 May the Rhino Knights team, myself, my husband Lloyd and my sister Raphaela will head out from Durban towards Cape Town on a 10000km campaign around Southern Africa. Our mission is to ➡

In early 2009, the entire population of 11 rhino were killed at our horse trail business based in the former Transkei. Four were shot with a permit and the rest were poached within a year. Overpopulation by man hungry for food, space, power and more has led to a dwindling animal and plant kingdom. Every 12 hours about 2000kg of rhino life is slaughtered for about 5kg of horn weight. With all that is being done rhino poaching is still very much on the increase and at this current rate our children will not lay their eyes upon this species as adults. A demand for horn in Asian countries has caused symptoms of large-scale slaughter, poaching, violence, greed and corruption. When we moved away from the Eastern

Cape we synchronistically met Dr Ian Player who has since become our mentor and friend guiding us in our quest to find ultimate purpose in life - 'Rhino Knights' under the banner of our NPO, Earth Awareness, was the result. Earth Awareness is about creating awareness of self, others and the environment which ultimately creates greater care for our planet and the living.

During the Rhino Knights campaign every day on the move I will run a half marathon (21kms); cycle 55kms and, on the same day, horse ride an entry level endurance event of 25kms. Some parts of the journey may be done without the horse component and the travelled distance on foot and bicycle will therefore increase. Covering a daily distance



Photos Tracy Robertson Photography

KNIGHTS

⇒ solve the Rhino poaching problem through global awareness and action creating a collective conservation consciousness. By saving this species we believe that the world makes a standpoint to protect this planet and preserve its biodiversity,' says Isabel Wolf-Gillespie. She reports.

of on average 100kms, our route will take us through some beautiful, yet harsh and very remote countryside in SA, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and back to Durban. Assisted by a support vehicle, Lloyd and Raphaela, I will cover the distance in about five months. During the campaign we are networking with as many conservation organisations and individuals from reserves and parks to show our support and, through a survey, gain knowledge and information on the current rhino situation. The publicly involving social media awareness drive aims to cover the world with Rhino Knights, uniting our voices as one for rhinos. Along our route we have arranged educational talks at schools to motivate and inspire the next

'The publicly involving social media awareness drive aims to cover the world with Rhino Knights, uniting our voices as one for Rhino. Along our route we have arranged educational talks at schools to motivate and inspire the next generation, and encourage people to run and cycle with us on our route.'

generation. To show support for the remaining and future rhinos we are asking the public to run and



It is so easy to get caught up in life, trying to fight daily battles that we don't notice how nature and its bountiful wildlife is being destroyed and exploited in front of our eyes; which reminds me of what Gandhi said: **'Earth provides enough for every man's needs but not for every mans greed.'**

cycle with us along our route, fun runs and events are being set up to raise funds and involve the sporting community. Information on dates, times, and so on can be found on our website www.earthawareness.co.za. Funds raised during this campaign will be allocated to the Lawrence Anthony Earth Organisation and the Magqubu Ntombela Foundation, an initiative of Dr lan Player's, for their Anti-poaching, intelligence and educational initiatives. Through this campaign, we are encouraging real social change that's needed for the better of our planet.

As I write this I have just returned from my daily two-hour training run and each and every day I am inspired by the beauty surrounding me while I am out there. I exercise at dawn every morning and an incredible amount of birds in all colours are flying and chirping around me, the sun is shining warm on my face and the trees and branches sway gently back and forth in the wind. In preparation for this journey I have put myself on a hard exercise schedule. Each morning I run passed the gogos and gardeners who are on their way to work and by now we recognise each other. Along with their hearty smiles and waves I often receive comments like, 'Hau! Young lady now you are fit enough to run the marathon' or 'Eish Ma, mustn't gym when it's raining'. They speak with disbelief and at the same time admiration and few others can lift my spirits as much they do.

The preparation and organisation of this campaign has been exceedingly challenging, filled with daily disappointments and successes. I get so caught up in the stresses and the pressure of this that I sometimes have to remind myself why I actually want to do this.

Not too long ago I attended a meeting and a person there glossed over the rhino crisis situation making out that there are not enough obvious facts and signs that

rhino are in fact in a crisis. A country flooded by rubbish and litter, 668 dead rhino last year and 204 dead this year already, a list of endangered species worldwide that continuously grows, and natural resources being used beyond the limits. I ask you the question, how many more facts or signs do we actually need? The signs and facts are plain to see but we have to choose to see them and respond to them.

Writing this article I tell myself to look up from my desk to see the beauty outside my office door that opens out onto the garden. Nature offers us generously and without asking for anything in return. It is so easy to get caught up in life, trying to fight daily battles that we don't notice how nature and its bountiful wildlife are being destroyed and exploited in front of our eyes. I listen, I see and I hear nature's desperate cry for help.

Suddenly I remember again why I have made this my life and purpose - I don't want this beauty being destroyed, irreversibly.

I remember the feeling of being outdoors on a camping trip in the Drakensberg or in the bush somewhere surrounded by nature and all that lives. The trees, the birds, the plants, the wildlife - sitting on my office chair I allow myself to feel the connection, the freedom and the happiness they bring. In our own private capacity we all have the power to make a difference. **SG**

As a Rhino Knight I urge you to become a voice for the rhino, join us on the road, become a donor or support the campaign by becoming a sponsor. If you would like to be involved in any way please contact me on 076 577 1936 or isabel@ridingforhorses.co.za. Follow our journey on the Rhino Knights Facebook page and through the weekly video upload of Rhino Knights on Youtube. Donations can be made via our website www.earthawareness.co.za, on Givengain or Donate R10 by SMSing the word RHINOKNIGHTS to 48716.