

Mfuwe Lodge,
South Luangwa National Park.
Zambia.

14th September 2012

Dear President Zuma,

Having lived and worked in Africa's wild places for over thirty years I have been truly blessed to have had many unique and wonderful experiences...and to have shared Africa with the wild creatures that have inhabited this amazing continent for millions of years. It has been a memorable "journey" and I consider myself very fortunate to have lived alongside Africa's greatest natural resource.

Unfortunately the story has not always been a happy one, and I have witnessed many scenes of destruction and cruelty that have left me saddened... and extremely disappointed in mankind's greed and lack of concern for the future of their wildlife.

Throughout history humans have slaughtered and utilized wild animals with little consideration for future generations...this is by no means unique to Africa...Europe, Asia and the Americas have been equally guilty. Many species have become extinct and no longer inhabit the earth...for them there is no future, but there are still many species for which is still not too late.

When I first came to live in Zambia's South Luangwa National Park in the, early 1980's, I was able to watch, almost daily, one of the world's most unusual creatures. The almost 'prehistoric' black rhinoceros was numerous and was a great attraction to the park's many tourist visitors....

In the space of about five years the area's entire population, possibly as many as 8,000 individuals, was completely wiped out by illegal poachers... In spite of the best efforts of park authorities and private anti-poaching organizations, the rhino did not survive the onslaught of what was highly organized criminal activity. The loss to the country of such a huge resource was immeasurable... that such an iconic animal could have disappeared in such a short time was hard to believe, and yet it happened...to satisfy mankind's greed, vanity and ill conceived beliefs.

All that remained were the bleached bones...littering the bush....



Rhino skulls collected by anti-poaching scouts.

This story was repeated across Zambia and many other countries....but there was still hope for the survival of the species, thanks mainly to the efforts of the government and conservation organizations in South Africa.

However, this last refuge of the rhino is now facing greater and greater threats from illegal activity and once again we are contemplating the extinction of an entire species. That this should happen in the 21st century, after all the efforts to educate and raise awareness, is a situation of which mankind should be truly ashamed...

It is greatly encouraging to see that a younger generation are now adding their voice to the appeal to save the remaining rhinos...my generation was responsible for too much destruction...it would be tragic for the next generation to also witness such crimes.

I sincerely hope that the government and people of South Africa, and the rest of the world, listen to their children's voices...and ensure that their wildlife legacy continues to thrill and delight for many generations to come.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Salisbury.

(via email 9/14/12)

Professional Safari Guide, Manager and Teacher.