

BUSHtelegraph

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Rhino Darting



Monday the 14 of February 2011 was a day of great expectation; we had a mission in mind and our mission was to find and dart two rhinos so that we could place a chip in each of their horns. The chip number together with other information about that particular rhino is placed on record. At about 5am some 56 bleary eyed guests clambered onto our vehicles in the hope of witnessing this event. It was not long before the helicopter had spotted two potential candidates. Rhinos have a very thick hide and sometimes the dart does not penetrate properly. This is indeed what happened but the second dart was successful. Luckily, the first rhino came to rest right next to the road. Teamwork is the name of the game and various things need to happen quickly and efficiently. The horn is drilled, the chip inserted, measurements of the rhino are taken and of course, the vital signs are constantly checked. The first rhino that was darted was a female and we realized that she was also a mother to be. After she had woken up and lumbered off into the bush we could focus our attention on darting the second rhino. She took a while to drop but luckily for us, it was also in an accessible place. Having done the necessary we all climbed back onto the vehicles and headed for the conference centre to drop off our guests. This is not the first time that micro-chips have been placed in rhinos here at Mabalingwe, but it remains a privilege to be able to get so close to an animal that is taking tremendous strain because of poaching. Will our children be able to do the same?

It's a way of life!



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