

U3A: OVERBERG: OPEN MEETING

DATE: THURSDAY 11 OCTOBER 2012

TOPIC: CONSERVATION OF AFRICA'S RHINOS - WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

SPEAKER: DR JOHN HANKS

VENUE: OVERSTRAND MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

TIME: 17h30

Poaching of rhinos, throughout the world, continues to increase and to appal all human beings – except, of course, the growing market in China and Vietnam for folk medicines containing shaved or powdered rhino horn.

In South Africa 444 rhino were poached in 2011 and the figure for 2012 is higher for the period to the end of June than it was last year – 290. “Poach” is a really a soft word for shooting animals, often with assault rifles, and then brutally cutting out the horn, sometimes while the animal is still alive. While there is absolutely no evidence that the horn has any medicinal properties, it is eagerly sought after by those wishing to show that they are wealthy and that they have the means to increase their male potency. To the end user the cost of rhino horn is greater than an equivalent weight in gold.

Dr John Hanks has just completed an evaluation of rhino projects in Africa. With rhino poaching throughout the continent and particularly in South Africa receiving international attention, how serious is the problem, and what are the options for reducing poaching?

Using illustrated examples from various African countries and from Asia, Dr Hanks will unpack the reasons for the surge in poaching since the 1970s, particularly the importance of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

He will examine proposals to reduce the illegal trade, including increased security and field protection linked to under-cover investigations of the poaching networks, legalizing the trade in rhino horn and “farming” rhinos, dehorning rhinos, treating the horns with poison, and campaigns to persuade the end-users to stop using rhino horn.

John Hanks has worked in several African countries, including Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. His major most important postings have been: Chief Professional Officer for the Natal Parks Board; Professor and Head of the Department of Biological Sciences, then the first Director of the Institute of Natural Resources at the University of Natal; the Director of the Africa Program for WWF International (based in Gland, Switzerland); the Chief Executive of WWF-South Africa; the first Executive Director of the Peace Parks Foundation. He has published over 150 scientific papers.

Members; R10
Non-members: R25