

Walking With Hunters

In her diary, wildlife photographer Anne le Trimel describes how she helped conservationists move a black rhinoceros from Namibia to a wildlife reserve in Kenya.

MONDAY 16 JUNE 2008

In the early hours of morning I arrived at base camp, where I met Bill Tresby, the expedition leader. As day broke, I was struck by the sense of calm in the new-born light.

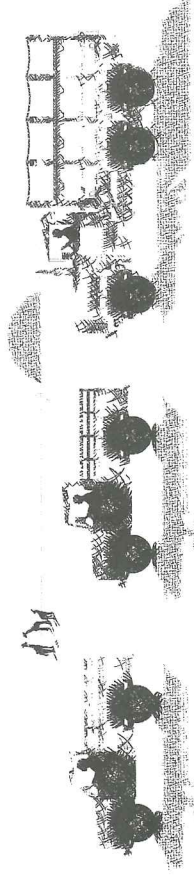
Over a simple breakfast, Bill told me that animals in Africa were in danger, especially the black rhino. Rhino horn fetches a high price in many countries abroad, where it's used in traditional pills and potions. The punishments are harsh for poachers who get caught, but some are still lured by the promise of instant cash and risk their lives to kill a black rhino for its horn.

As the camp workers began to pack up around us, Bill leant forward.

"What they leave of the rhino isn't pretty," he said to me, as he pulled his travel-beaten hat down over his tousled brown hair.

We set off in four-wheel drive pick-ups. There is nothing quite like the anticipation of starting an expedition: spirits were high as we kangarooed our way over the uneven ground.

The rest of the day was spent criss-crossing the plains, photographing gazelles, baboons and other creatures we met along the way. We set up camp as dusk began to fall.



Diary continues over the page →

TUESDAY 17 JUNE 2008

We awoke to another clear blue sky.

"Today, we'll hopefully be tracking a herd of rhinos," explained our guide, Zollahase. "I'd been told there's a herd in this area, and this morning I found fresh droppings and footprints." Zollahase has been working with rhinos for years and knows very well the threat they face at the hands of poachers. "We have also heard," Zollahase went on, "that poachers are working in this area. I only hope we aren't too late."

As we made our way across the wide open plains, my heart was pounding.

And then the truck ahead of us stopped abruptly.

As the dust cleared, I feared I was about to see for myself exactly what Bill had warned me about the day before. I was right.

It was the saddest thing I had ever seen in my life. Everything about the rhino was perfect, apart from the wounds on its face where its horns used to be. The poachers had left this magnificent beast to rot in the dust. Its life had been dignified but its death had not.

"I did warn you," said Bill, sympathetically. He could see I was shaking with anger and shame at what humans can do.

The leading truck started its engines and hurtled off, like a zebra fleeing a lioness. A crackling voice on the walkie-talkie told us why. It was Zollahase: "I see them, a small herd of 6 or 7 rhinos straight ahead. We will begin to arm!"

A gun, just like the one used by the poachers, was about to bring down another rhino. But we were using tranquilliser darts, not bullets. Through the clinging yellow dust clouds, I could see the herd, running frantically from the trucks. To them we were death. The creatures in these metal beasts stole their brothers and sisters and did not care for the wild at all, so the rhinos ran and ran for cover in the bushes.

It was a magnificent sight. Not that their strides were fuelled by fear but that they were free in the land of their birth. As I watched, Zollahase raised the gun and fired a dart straight into the hide of the largest female. She kept on running, but she gradually slowed and stumbled. Her family were far away when she finally gave in to the tranquilliser. To them she was dead now, but they could not spend time missing her, because they had to think about their own survival.

The rest of the day was spent nursing the sleeping rhino. We winched her into the back of a specially built, reinforced truck and started the journey back to base camp. She was so beautiful we named her Marilyn — after Marilyn Monroe. She weighed almost three quarters of a tonne and her hide was rough and thick, like a dulled suit of armour. Her horns stand proudly on her snout — and that's where they're going to stay.

WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE 2008

Marilyn woke up in a rage on the journey back yesterday, stamping and kicking at the sides of the truck, but by the time we stopped for the night she was relatively quiet. Gordon Caine, the expedition vet, was checking up on her all through the night. When the rest of us got up this morning, she didn't seem to be distressed at all.

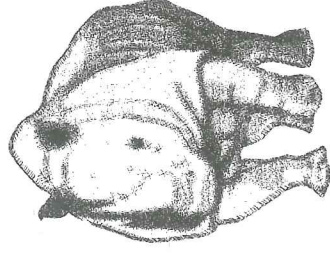
Over breakfast I asked Bill what would happen to Marilyn at the Kenyan wildlife reserve. He told me that she would be part of a breeding programme to boost the numbers of black rhino. Eventually, young rhinos would be returned to Namibia.

If Marilyn looked calm during breakfast, her mood certainly changed when it was time to return her to her truck. She was bucking and snorting, as Gordon and his assistants tried to restrain her. After half an hour of tussling, Gordon decided Marilyn would have to be tranquilised one last time.

My adventure has saddened and enlightened me about human beings. People like poachers who kill for profit are capable of such cruelty, but then people like Bill, Gordon and Zollahase are so brave in their fight against the same cruelty.

We were back at base camp by late afternoon. We were greeted by vets from the Kenyan wildlife reserve, eager to check Marilyn over for themselves. Gordon will be travelling to Kenya with Marilyn. Once she's arrived and had a few weeks to get over the journey, she'll be introduced to other rhinos on the reserve. Eventually, Bill hopes that Marilyn will have offspring of her own, playing her part in the recovery of the species.

As I sit watching Marilyn in her reinforced pen, totally oblivious to the journey she's about to make, it all seems like a very long way in the future. But at least her future is secure and now I've seen the dedication of Bill's team I'm sure the future of the black rhino is secure too.



EPILOGUE

FRIDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2012

Totally out of the blue, I got a phone call today from Bill. He said Marilyn was doing fine and that she had settled down in Kenya well. He also told me that she is now a proud mother of two and firmly in charge of the other new rhinos at the reserve.

"She's a kind of mother to them all," said Bill, laughing, and I felt prouder than ever.

Sometimes you need to do a bit of detective work to figure out exactly what's going on in the text. See if you can work out the answers to these INFERENCE questions.

1. Why do you think the breakfast was 'simple'?
.....
1 mark

2. 'Its life had been dignified but its death had not.'
Explain what this sentence means and why it is important to the story.
.....
2 marks

3. 'To them we were death. The creatures in these metal beasts stole their brothers and sisters and did not care for the wild at all'
What are the 'metal beasts'?
.....
1 mark

4. Using the information in the text, describe how the person who wrote the diary is feeling just before the team set off. Refer to the text in your answer.
.....
2 marks

5. 'It was a magnificent sight. Not that their strides were fuelled by fear but that they were free in the land of their birth.'
How do you think the diarist was feeling at this point?
Answer the question as fully as you can.
.....
2 marks

6. What impression does the writer give you of what the rhinos' life is like?
.....
1 mark

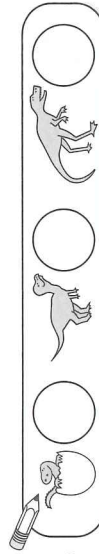
7. 'My adventure has saddened and enlightened me about human beings.'
Explain Anne's emotions using examples from the text to back up your answer.
.....
2 marks

8. 'As I sit watching Marilyn in her reinforced pen, totally oblivious to the journey she's about to make, it all seems like a very long way in the future.'
What journey do you think the writer is talking about?
.....
2 marks

9. "She's a kind of mother to them all," said Bill, laughing, and I felt prouder than ever.'
Why do you think Anne le Trimel was feeling proud?
.....
2 marks

10. What ideas are we given about poaching from this article?
.....
1 mark

Reading Raptors can do inference questions faster than you can eat a chocolate button. How did you do?





Language Questions



For LANGUAGE questions you need to think about why the writer chose to use particular words or phrases — there will be a reason. Read the diary again and try these questions.

1. Find and copy the phrase from Tuesday 17 June that tells you the writer is excited.
.....
.....

1 mark

2. ‘As day broke, I was struck by the sense of calm in the new-born light.’

Why do you think the writer uses the word ‘new-born’?

2 marks

.....
.....

3. Why do you think the writer uses the word ‘kangarooed’ to describe the journey?

1 mark

.....

4. ‘And then the truck ahead of us stopped abruptly.’

Why do you think the writer wrote this as a sentence all by itself?

1 mark

.....

5. ‘The leading truck started its engines and hurtled off, like a zebra fleeing a lioness.’

What does this tell you about the way the truck moved?

2 marks

.....
.....

6. ‘her hide was rough and thick, like a dulled suit of armour.’

What is the effect of this simile?

2 marks

.....
.....



Language Questions



7. Do you think ‘Walking With Hunters’ is a good title for the diary?

Explain your answer as fully as you can.

2 marks

.....
.....

8. ‘Through the clinging yellow dust clouds, I could see the herd, running frantically from the trucks.’

a) Underline the two adjectives in the sentence.

1 mark

b) Explain what the writer means by ‘clinging yellow dust clouds’.

.....
.....

2 marks

9. Why do you think the dead rhino was described as a ‘magnificent beast’?

2 marks

.....
.....

10. ‘He could see I was shaking with anger and shame at what humans can do.’

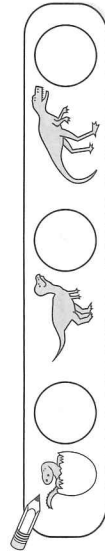
What does the word ‘shaking’ tell you about how Anne le Trimmel was feeling?

2 marks

.....
.....

.....

Reading Raptors love language questions more than they love chasing chickens. How did you get on?



AF2

Fact Retrieval Questions

FACT RETRIEVAL questions aren't too bad. You just need to pick out facts from the text. Read the diary entries again and see if you can pick out the answers to these questions.

1. The rhino is named

Michaela

Marjorie

Marilyn

Marion

1 mark

Circle your answer.

2. The rhino became more angry as the morning of Wednesday 18 June wore on.

Find and copy two words that describe what she was doing to show her anger.

2 marks

3. The black rhino was going to Kenya

to make new friends

to be an extra in a wildlife film

to be part of a breeding programme

to entertain the public

1 mark

Put a ring around your choice.

4. What is the main purpose of Anne le Trimel's visit?

To take photos of trucks.

To help save a black rhino from poachers.

To meet some interesting characters.

To take photos of poachers being caught.

1 mark

Put a ring around your choice.

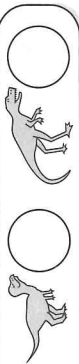
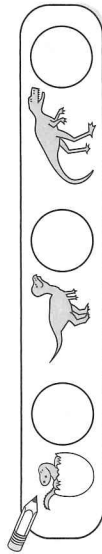
5. Write down two ways that guns affect the lives of the rhinos in this piece of writing.

2 marks

1.

2.

Fact finding is a favourite pastime of Reading Raptors. Tick to show how you got on with these questions.



The last few questions on Walking With Hunters are hidden under there



AF6

Writer's Purpose Questions

Think about how reading the text makes you feel — it'll help with these WRITER'S PURPOSE questions.

1. How does the writer make you feel when she writes about finding the dead rhino?

2 marks

.....

2. Anne's diary begins with a description of the 'sense of calm' she felt.

Why do you think she started by describing this? Refer to the text in your answer.

3 marks

.....

3. The writer refers to the journey in the trucks throughout the diary.

Why do you think she does this? Refer to the text in your answer.

3 marks

.....

4. What does the writer think about poaching? How can you tell?

Refer to the text in your answer.

3 marks

.....

Reading Raptors are great at working out what the writer is trying to make the reader feel. Can you?

