

Project Update: July 2014

With the end of the rainy months and the thus reduced vegetation cover, conditions were defined conducive to mount a major rhino darting operation in Liwonde National Park in early June 2014. The campaign lasted for 12 days and was co-led by Dr Pete Morkel of the IUCN-SSC African Rhino Specialist Group and involved my research team, national parks trackers and volunteers. Five individual rhinos were darted and fitted with VHF horn transmitters (tested and fine-tuned prior to operation). Dr Morkel and Dr Amanda Salb (Veterinarian, Lilongwe Wildlife Trust) also held hands-on training sessions to build capacity in capture and chemical restraint techniques among capture team members. During anaesthesia, horn tip and skin samples were collected for the Rhino DNA Gene Bank & Database; body parameters were recorded and essential indicators (e.g. pulse, breathing rate and temperature) were taken. The new VHF devices further our monitoring work to a great degree.



Left: Dr Pete Morkel at work. Middle: Sub-adult female fitted with horn transmitter. Right: VHF horn implant.