



Lake Erie Nature & Science Center

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TALE OF TWO SAFARIS: NORTHEAST OHIO WOMAN'S PASSION FOR ANIMALS LINKS WILDLIFE PROTECTION EFFORTS IN OHIO AND AFRICA

She adopted an orphaned elephant living in Africa and an educational lionfish that resides in Bay Village. Now one woman's concern for creatures is sending her on an expedition to Kenya to help protect the Black Rhino.

Bay Village, Ohio --- The size and location of the animals being saved are world's apart, but Rhonda Miller has a heart for all creatures of the wild, from the smallest squirrel in her Bay Village backyard to a mammoth rhinoceros on another continent.

"I've always had a passion for animals and the environment," Miller said. In September, Miller will put that passion into practice in both Northeast Ohio and halfway around the world in Africa. You might call it a "tale of two safaris."

The first, is a September 15 "Survivor Africa" safari-style benefit at Lake Erie Nature & Science Center, where Miller serves as a volunteer member of the non-profit's Board of Directors. The Center operates a Wildlife Rehabilitation Program as part of its larger mission to educate the community about the natural world.

Less than a week after the Center benefit, Miller will embark on her second safari, volunteering on an Earthwatch research mission to help bring black rhinos back from the brink of extinction in Kenya. Miller, a Manager of Global Ethics Education and Training at Eaton Corporation, will spend the extra week of vacation she earned this year in the Sweetwaters Black Rhino Reserve in Nanyuki, Kenya, collecting data on the rhinos, their behaviors and habitat.

Miller has special fondness for rhinos. "They are so incredible," she said. "One of the only creatures that looks truly prehistoric and fewer than 400 remain in that region, down from 20,000 just 30 years ago." Miller finds encouragement in the early success of the Earthwatch Sweetwaters' project, which has noted a population increase of about 100 in the rhino herd since the project's inception.

As part of her journey to Africa, Miller also has plans to visit the baby elephant she “adopted” at an elephant orphanage run by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. The Trust’s website says baby Shimba was orphaned a year ago at age six-weeks when his ailing mother died. The Trust allows only limited visitors so that the elephants can be integrated back into the wild elephant community when they’re grown.

The same goal exists for Miller’s favorite animal cause here in Ohio. Lake Erie Nature & Science Center took in more than 1,400 ill or injured local wildlife in 2006, with the ultimate goal of release back into the wild. Miller’s “adopted sibling” for Shimba here in Ohio is a lionfish. Miller sponsors the lionfish and the other creatures in the Center’s Oceans Exhibit through the Adopt An Animal Program. Wildlife lovers help to pay for the care and keeping of more than 100 exhibit animals through adoption sponsorships. Some of the exhibit animals are former rehab patients whose injuries prevented their release.

When Miller and her fellow wildlife supporters gather for Lake Erie Nature & Science Center’s Survivor Africa benefit, they will send Miller off on her next safari with a special toast. The signature drink for the evening: “Shimba’s Delight.”

Safari means “journey” in Swahili. Lake Erie Nature & Science Center welcomes anyone to make the journey to “Survivor Africa” from 6:30 to 10 p.m. on September 15. Tickets are \$50 person in advance; \$65 the evening of the event.

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Lake Erie Nature & Science Center: www.lensc.org

Earthwatch: <http://www.earthwatch.org/site/pp2.asp?c=dsJSK6PFJnH&b=1147477>

Sheldrick Wildlife Trust: <http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/index.asp>

Shimba:

http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/asp/orphan_gallery_zoom_keepers.asp?S=Keepers&ID=5172&N=161