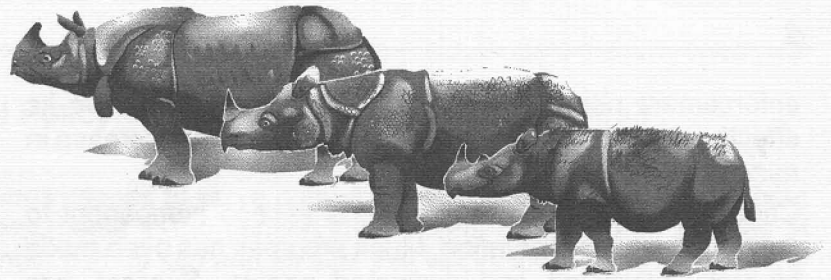


AsRSG



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ASIAN RHINOS

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This Newsletter reveals the many AsRSG activities of the past and present and the future plans for our determined efforts to protect and conserve all species of Asian Rhinos. Needless to say a great many people are involved from various Governments of Range States, NGO's and even politicians. The membership list is a good indication though there are also a great many who are not members.

The greater one-horned Rhinoceros is doing very well compared to the Javan and the Sumatran Rhinoceroses. Our Indian and Nepali partners have achieved immense success and they deserve our admiration and congratulations.

Admittedly, the situation in SE Asia is somewhat different though the problems are similar. The rhinos are in fact a lot more accessible and easier to find and there are many more rhinos per sq. km. in India and Nepal than in SE Asia. Amazingly, the rhinos are successfully protected and populations have increased greatly. We know that rhinos in the Sub-continent and Nepal are confined to smaller, intensively protected areas. The personnel are also much more: almost one forest guard per sq. km. It is impossible to do the same in Malaysia and Indonesia because the protected areas are too large. It was found that poachers have stayed away when RPU's were rotated and stayed continuous in protected areas. It is very hard work but wildlife rangers are willing to do the work with dedication and enthusiasm, provided that they are adequately rewarded. There is really no alternative in saving rhinos from the guns, traps and even poisons of unscrupulous poachers than to have adequate staff and funds.

The populations of the Javan and Sumatran rhinoceroses have been drastically reduced and there is little margin left for error. The existing system of law

habitat will have disappeared in 3-5 years time.

At the time of the survey, there was very little actual protection of the rhino population. Only restriction of the availability of firearms in the area has been implemented. There were only two guard posts with four guards for the whole area. The rhinos have already lost 85% of their habitat. There has been no protection of the rhino habitat. In fact, settlement inside the reserve has been stimulated by the construction of roads and other facilities for the Cat Loc Wildlife Reserve. There appeared to be no plan to curtail the current levels of encroachment and habitat destruction.

The survey was technically assisted by AsRSG and Fauna and Flora International (FFI) with financial support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund (USFWS RTCF) and the International Rhino Foundation (IRF).

THE 1999 CAT LOC RHINO CENSUS

In January 1999, a second census was carried out, just after the rainy season, using the same methods as in 1998. Over a period of one month, two teams of six persons surveyed the rhino area, covering 218 km of survey lines and collecting 144 plaster casts of rhino footprints. From the tracks a minimum number of 7 rhinos could be identified. Considering the possibility that some rhinos were not encountered the maximum number was estimated to be at least 8. A detailed report on the Park and the rhino population is published in *Pachyderm*.

Source: Polet, G., et al, 1999: The Javan Rhinoceros, *Rhinoceros sondaicus annamiticus*, of Cat Tien National Park, Vietnam: Current Status and Management Implications. *Pachyderm* 27, 34-48.

A PROTECTION STRATEGY FOR THE RHINO IN CAT TIEN NATIONAL PARK

Since 1998, the WWF Cat Tien National Park Conservation project, an integrated conservation and development project, has been fully operational. Cat Loc was included as part of the Park in January 1999. There are an estimated 6000 people living inside the park. Permanent and shifting agriculture represents a major part of their livelihood, together with hunting, fishing, logging and harvesting. The area occupied by the rhinos is entirely surrounded by farmland. Within the National Park, there are 18 guard posts and a park headquarters. Transport is provided by a number of vehicles, motor bikes and

boats. Despite the good management, good infrastructure, reasonable equipment of the guards and their hard work, there seems to be very little success, as the number of known offenses has not declined over the last four years, there is a significant number of repeat offenders and some communities continue to depend almost entirely on the park's natural resources. Some new measures need to be taken to remedy the situation, and specific recommendations have been suggested. However, the success of any future strategy will to a large extent rely on the rapid resolution of the problem of people living inside the park.

Source: Report by Philip Wells, IRF Field Operations Consultant, 1999.

THE NAMING OF THE VIETNAMESE RHINOCEROS

The French missionary, Father P.M. Heude (1836-1902) published some excellent works on Chinese natural history, including one on the conchyliology of the Nankin Province between 1875 and 1885. He continued to write about his observations on the mammals, describing many new species of deer, in a work entitled *Mémoires concernant l'Histoire Naturelle de l'Empire Chinois, par des Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus*. This work was published in a series of installments to be bound in different volumes, mostly printed in Shanghai. The rhinoceros appears as part of a study of dentition in mammals, in the second installment of the second volume, dated 1892 (pp.65-84: "Etudes odontologiques, première partie: Herbivores trizygodontes et dizygodontes"), accompanied by four plates (numbered XIXa, XX, XXa, XXb). On page 74, Heude described a lower molar from an Indochinese Rhinoceros, and in a footnote on p.75 he referred to an illustration on pl. XIXa showing the third deciduous premolar of "*Rh. annamiticus*." The same name appeared in the explanation to the plate on p.113.

The Indochinese specimens of *Rhinoceros sondaicus* were again critically examined and studied by C.P. Groves and C. Guérin in 1980 (*Geobios*, Lyon, no.13 (2), 1980). They concluded that these specimens differed in various craniological and odontological features from the other populations. Using Heude's long-forgotten name, they established that the rhinoceros known from the different countries in Indo-China constituted a separate subspecies, *Rhinoceros sondaicus annamiticus* Heude, 1892. (Dr Kees Rookmaaker).