

OVERVIEW OF STATUS OF ASIAN & AFRICAN RHINO

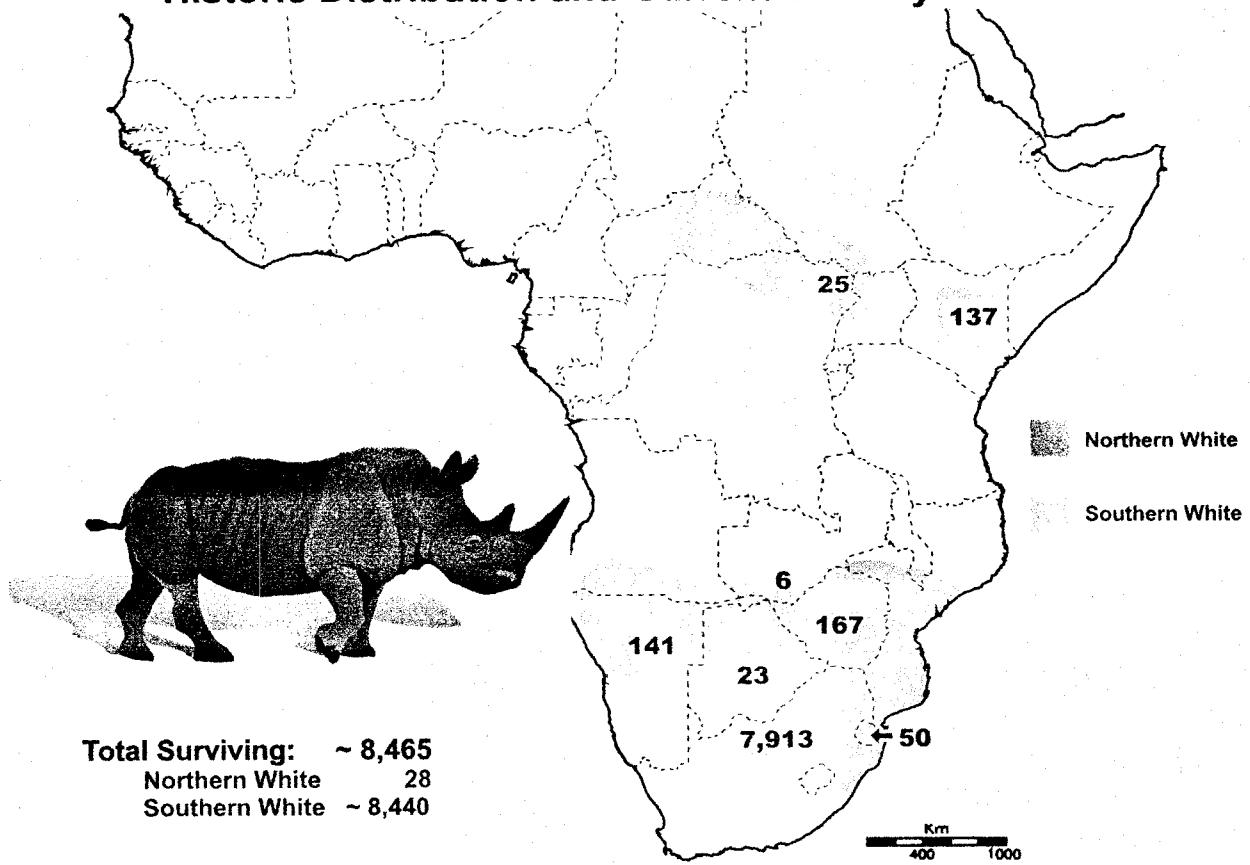
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There have been both progress and problems over the past five years with the status of the five extant rhinoceros species and their various subspecies. Table 1 (page 36) provides a summary of the latest reported numbers by species and subspecies for both wild and captive populations.

Worldwide, there are now about 14,000 rhino in the wild in 1999. This total number has improved

WHITE RHINO

Historic Distribution and Current Country Totals - 1998



Total Surviving: ~ 8,465
Northern White 28
Southern White ~ 8,440

Figure 1

considerably since the early 1990s when total rhinos in the wild were down under 11,000. However, the status of the various rhino taxa varies considerably, some are recovering, others are still declining or at least remaining as precarious as ever.

Over 60% of the surviving rhino are of 1 subspecies, the southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) (Figure 1). This subspecies represents one of the two great success stories in recent rhino conservation. This subspecies has recovered from a low point of about 30 rhino at the start of the 20th Century.

Ironically, the northern subspecies of white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) is one of the 3 most critically endangered taxa of rhino with no more than 25 surviving. This subspecies has fluctuated in

numbers and had been as high as 32 in the early 1990s but has declined again due to two civil wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo, its last range state.

The black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) declined precipitously from 1970 when there may have been 70,000, to the early 1990s, when numbers were down to 2,300. This precipitous decline has received more publicity than the plight of any other rhino species. However, over the last three to four years, the species, and three of its four subspecies, have been recovering with at least 2,600 at the end of 1997/start of 1998 and probably 100-200 more today. The species is distributed securely in five major range states. However, the fourth subspecies, the western (*D. b. longipes*), is also one of three most critically endangered taxa mentioned before.

BLACK RHINO Historic Distribution and Current Country Totals - 1998

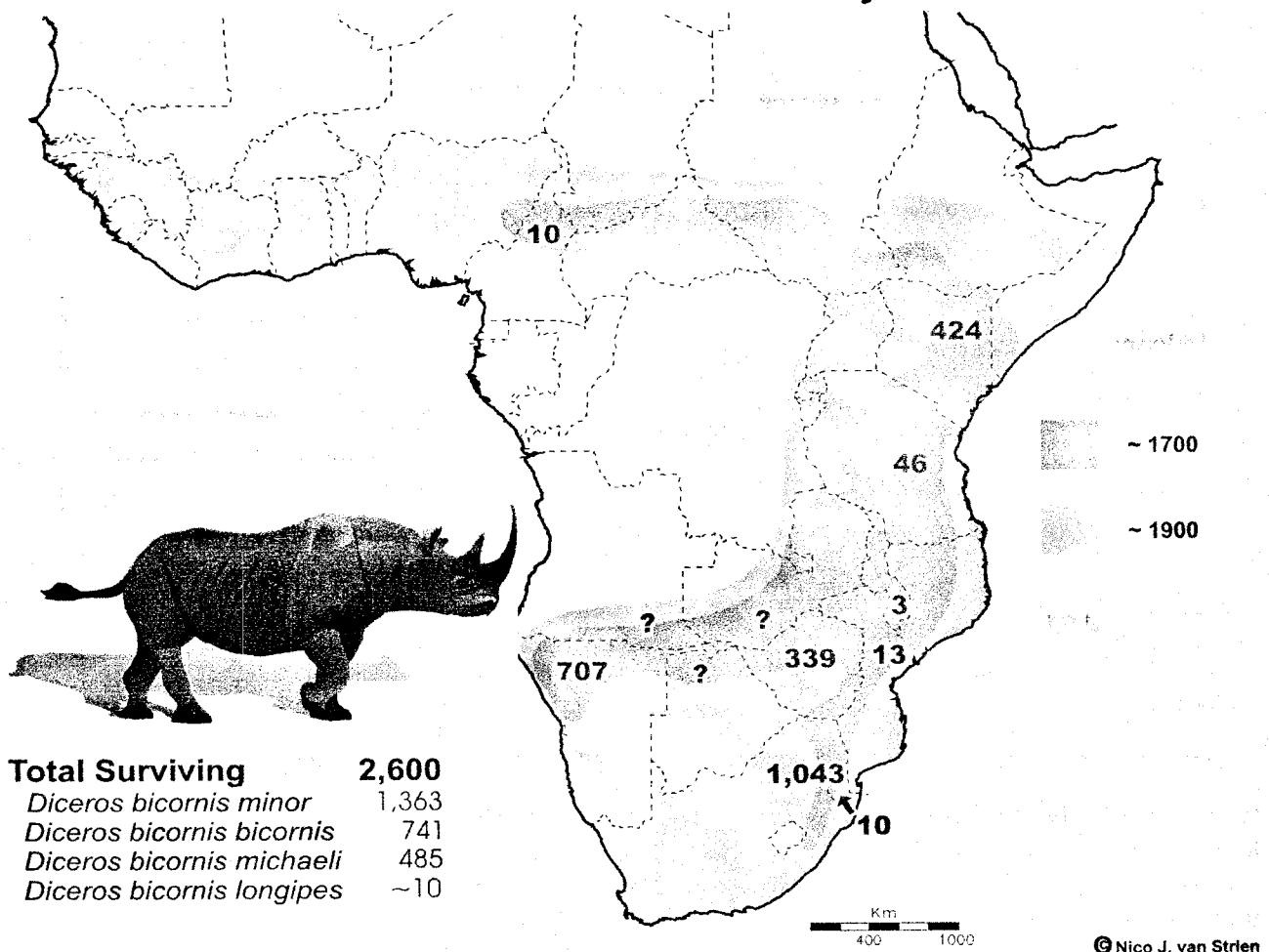


Figure 2

Asian rhinos are more endangered than the African. The numbers of all three species of Asian rhino combined are probably fewer than the rarer of the African species, i.e. the black rhino. (Table 1 & Figure 3). Table 2 provides a summary by species and country of Asian rhino numbers.

Clearly, *Rhinoceros unicornis*, the Indian rhino, is the other great success story in rhinoceros conservation (See map on page 4). In India, numbers have recovered from about 20 rhino at the start of this century to 1,800 today. In Nepal, numbers had declined to below 50 and now recovered to over 600. This success has been achieved by the most intense conservation supported almost entirely by

the governments of India and Nepal. This recovery and the total numbers of this species are most encouraging.

Tabel 1: WILD AND CAPTIVE POPULATIONS OF RHINOCEROS - 1999

SPECIES, SUBSPECIES or GEOGRAPHIC RANGE	WILD POPULATION	CAPTIVE POPULATION
Southwestern Black Rhino	740	0
Northwestern Black Rhino	~10	0
Eastern Black Rhino	485	175
Southern Black Rhino	1,365	60
TOTAL BLACK RHINO	2,600	235
Northern White Rhino	25	9
Southern White Rhino	8,440	~700
TOTAL WHITE RHINO	8,465	~710
AFRICAN RHINO SPECIES	11,065	~945
Indian Rhino - East (Assam, W. Bengal)	1,848	~140
Indian Rhino - West (Nepal, Uttar Pradesh)	672	
TOTAL INDIAN RHINO	2,520	~140
Indonesian Javan Rhino	50-60	0
Vietnamese Javan Rhino	5-8	0
TOTAL JAVAN RHINO	~60	0
Eastern (Borneo) Sumatran Rhino	~50	3
Western (Sumatra/Malaya) Sumatran Rhino	~250	14
TOTAL SUMATRAN RHINO	~300	17
ASIAN RHINO SPECIES	~2,880	~157
ALL RHINO SPECIES	~14,000	~1,100
ALL RHINO SPECIES	~14,000	1,100

However, long-term viability involves distribution as well as abundance and the fact that most of the Indian rhino are in just two populations is a reason for concern. Limited distribution is a concern because of stochastic risks, e.g. the catastrophic floods that occur in Kaziranga or the social unrest that has decimated the once sizable population of Manas. For long-term viability, it is recommended that a rhino taxon achieve a total population of at least 2,500, preferably 5,000, individuals distributed across 10 or more populations, each of which is at least 100 in size and several of which are 500 or more in size.

The rarest of the species of rhino is the Javan (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) with fewer than 70 estimated to remain in just two populations: one in Java (~ 50 individuals) and the other in Vietnam (with only 5-8 survivors, the last of the three most critically endangered rhino taxa) (Figure 4).

However, the most critically endangered of all rhino species is probably the Sumatran (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) (Figure 5). Although its numbers (~300) are greater than are the numbers of the Javan, the populations are more fragmented and less secure, because the species is still under intense pressure from poachers.

While precarious, the status of both the Southeast Asian rhino species (Sumatran and Javan) has improved over the last three years with the establishment of anti-poaching teams know as Rhino Protection Units or RPUs. The AsRSG and IRF have helped range states organize the RPUs, with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), US Fish & Wildlife Service Rhino & Tiger Conservation Fund, WWF, the American Association of Zoo Keepers, the Anna Merz Foundation, and other partners.

In conclusion, the situation for some rhinos is better, but others are still on the brink of extinction. All rhino taxa remain conservation dependent and there is no cause for relaxation or complacency in efforts to conserve these spectacular creatures.

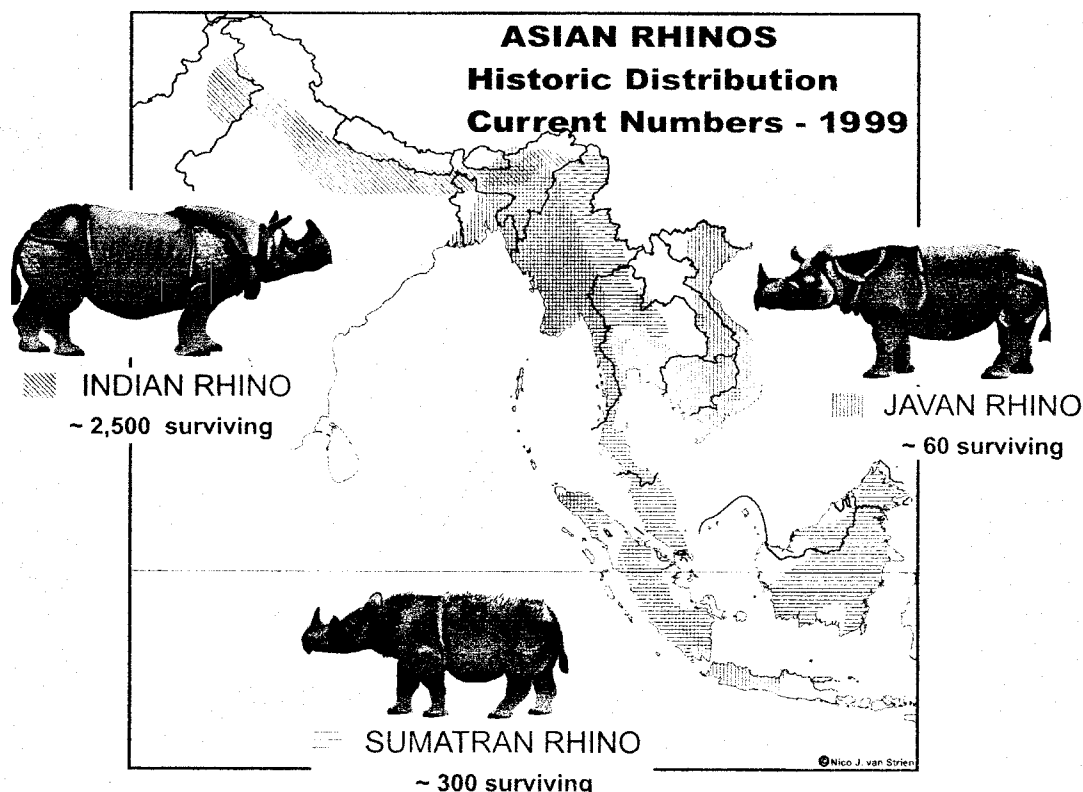


Figure 3

Table 2: 1999 ASIAN RHINO POPULATIONS

	INDIAN RHINO <i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>	JAVAN RHINO <i>Rhinoceros sondaicus</i>	SUMATRAN RHINO <i>Dicerorhinus sumatrensis</i>	TOTAL
INDIA	~1,820			~1,820
NEPAL	~650			~650
INDONESIA		~50	110-200	160-250
MALAYSIA			120-160 70-90 (Peninsula) 50-70 (Sabah)	120-160
VIETNAM		5-8		5-8
LAOS			?	?
THAILAND			?	?
MYANMAR			10?	10?
TOTAL	~2,470	~60	~300	~ 2,830

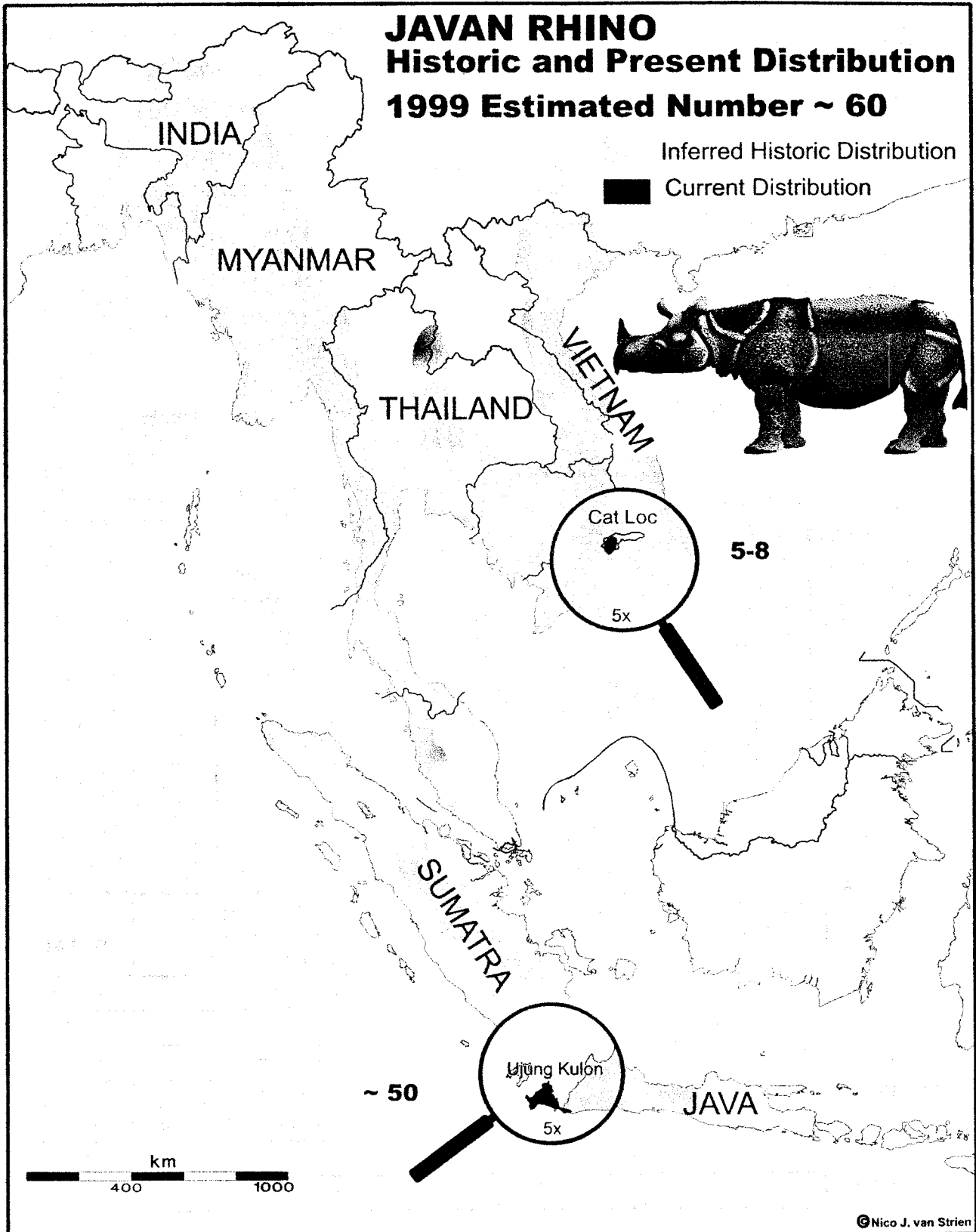


Figure 4

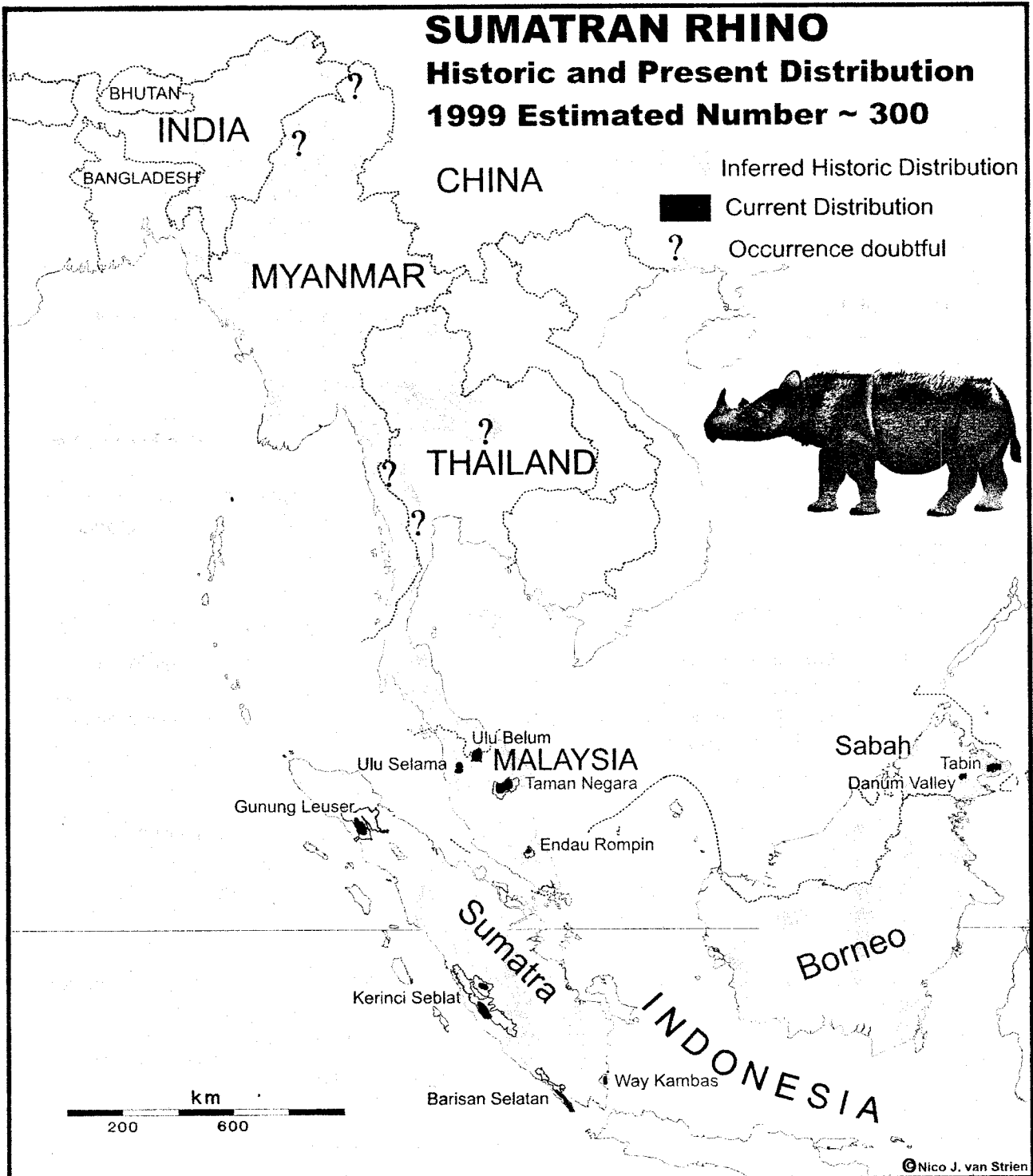


Figure 5

