

## **RHINOCEROS UNICORNIS TRADE ISSUES**

**ESMOND BRADLEY MARTIN, RHINO TRADE SPECIALIST, IUCN & WWF**

By introduction, I wish to thank the International Rhino Foundation (IRF) for making it possible for me to attend this meeting here in Kaziranga. I would like to discuss with you several important issues.

First, we know a lot about the rhino horn trade in India and Nepal. We know the size of the poaching gangs (four to six people on average), the approximate amount of money earned by the gangs (\$1,500 to \$3,000 for a kilo of horn, the price the middleman will sell horn to another middleman in a major town (around \$3,000 to \$6,000 a kilo) and the price a trader can obtain for a horn from the Greater One-horned Rhino in Thailand or Taiwan (\$9,000 to \$ 10,000 a kilo).

We also know the main trade routes. In Nepal these are from Narayanghat, Pokhara and Kathmandu and then to eastern Asia by air. In India (well documented by Vivek Menon and myself working totally independently of each other) these are:

- a) West Bengal: Siliguri to Phuntsholing, Thimpu and Paro and then to eastern Asia by air
- b) Assam: 1) From Manas to Siliguri, Phuntsholing, Thimpu and Paro and then to eastern Asia by air;  
2) Kaziranga to Nagaland, and probably overland to Burma.

In addition, we understand the methods of killing rhinos in India and Nepal: shooting, pits, electrocution, snaring and poisoning.

What we do not know is the end market for rhino products from the Greater One-horned Rhino in eastern Asia. This lack of information is a scandal.

On two recent trips to Burma, I saw no rhino products in Rangoon, Mandalay, Myawaddy nor Tachilek. I did see Asian rhino horns in Laos in 1989, but none in Vietnam in 1989 and 1990, nor in Cambodia in the mid-1990s.

In order to better conserve the Greater One-horned Rhino it is imperative to do surveys to ascertain where the horns from India and Nepal end up.

My second point is that at the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES in 1994, the Parties adopted a resolution (Conf. 9.14) prepared by the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group. This resolution, among other points, directed the Standing Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of actions to reduce the illegal trade in rhino products and to develop standardized indicators of success to measure any changes in the levels of illegal hunting and the status of rhinos.

One indicator of success is the status of consumer demand for rhino products in the main markets. If the demand goes up, prices may also increase for rhino horn, putting even more poaching pressure on rhinos in India and Nepal. Fortunately, although the supply of both African and Asian horns on the world's markets has decreased over the past few years, the price has not increased significantly. However, this needs detailed monitoring in Yemen and eastern Asia as no fieldwork has been carried out in these places over the past few years.

On the other hand, we have good information on the numbers of rhinos which have died in Nepal and India over the past 20 years or so (from the 1960s to 1997 at least 950 have died from various causes, including poaching, in Assam alone). We know approximately how many of these horns went onto the world's markets. Thus, we have some data on supply. Now we need to know changes in prices in the consuming countries in order to obtain some data on changes in demand.

Specifically, we need to study the markets in the following places that were previously major importers and consumers of Asian rhino horns: Thailand, Singapore, Macao, Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan. We also need to obtain economic data from some of the entrepots for Asian rhino products such as Bhutan

and Burma. Obtaining and analyzing this data will be an important component for the CITES indicators of success for rhino conservation.

A third issue I would like to bring up is that at the last IUCN Asian Rhino meeting in Sabah, delegates from Indonesia told me that they knew almost nothing about the trade in rhino products in their country and that they wanted to set up a study. However, this project has still not been initiated.

Another general point is that Yemen, which is probably the largest importer of African rhino horn in the world, has not been studied for over two years. Although, no Asian horn is imported into the country because it is too expensive, the shavings from the African horns are exported to eastern Asia for medicinal purposes. We have a lot of detailed information on the demand, supply and prices of horn in Yemen since 1978, so it is imperative that this still important market is once again monitored.

A fifth issue which I would like to discuss is that one of the major reasons so few rhinos have been killed in India and Nepal over the past few years is because large sums of money are spent on their protection: \$500 to \$2,000 per km<sup>2</sup> per year. Kaziranga National Park allocates just under \$2,000 per km<sup>2</sup> per year while the Forest Department in Jaldapara in West Bengal spends just over \$2,000. For comparison, the budgets for Indonesia's protected areas with rhinos is under \$80 per km<sup>2</sup> a year; no wonder there has been extensive rhino poaching in Indonesia since 1984.

Manpower on the ground is also an important component for success in rhino conservation. In Nepal and India, there is one man patrolling for every one or two km<sup>2</sup> in rhino protected areas. In Kaziranga, for example, there is one man for each km<sup>2</sup>. In some African countries where rhino conservation has failed, there is only one person for every 100 or so km<sup>2</sup>.

My final point is that another major component for success in rhino conservation is adequate money for intelligence. Relatively small amounts have been very successful. For example, in Nepal an NGO has been giving small amounts of money to pay informers around Chitwan National Park. Starting in 1991, with only \$45 allocated to intelligence on average each month, eight rhino poachers and eight tiger poachers were caught in that year. In 1992 three tiger poachers were caught, while in 1993 with \$3,000 of informant money for the whole year 37 rhino poachers and three tiger poachers were apprehended. In Africa, studies have demonstrated that spending money on intelligence is 30 times more cost effective than putting an extra person on patrol in the field.

In Kaziranga National Park, only eight rhinos were poached in 1998, the lowest figure since 1979, due partly to good intelligence.

Money for good intelligence gathering and for informants is thus of the highest importance for successful rhino conservation. I am therefore pleased to announce that Anna Merz, who recently visited Kaziranga for the first time and was very impressed with what she was shown, has donated \$3,000 specifically for intelligence gathering. This will be channelled through the IRF which has promised to raise an additional \$2,000, thus making a total of \$5,000 for intelligence. I wish to thank Anna Merz, a close friend of mine, and the IRF for their financial support for rhino conservation in Assam.

