

1981, but recent estimates show that imports from China, where musk deer are farmed, have doubled over the past year.

The Japanese are also the world's largest consumers of ivory. Eighty percent of the African raw ivory exports are to Japan and Hong Kong. Until recently, Japan was a major trafficker in rhino horn as well, importing an average of 800 kilos annually.

Public awareness regarding endangered species issues is very low in Japan. TRAFFIC will play a major educational role in publicising CITES and the world trade in threatened wildlife.

"Japanese conservationists, through many kinds of activities, are now co-

operating with a number of groups and countries in Asia", reported Mr Noritaka Ichida, Director of the Wild Bird Society of Japan.

"I think TRAFFIC Japan will play a vital communication role in introducing these efforts to the international conservation movement and, likewise, bring important information to our society. I am hopeful that a truly 'international' situation will become firmly established."

Dr Obara's Scientific Advisory Committee will largely be responsible for assisting in the identification of wildlife and derivative products, accumulating and interpreting data, reviewing and evaluating TRAFFIC reports and projects, and distributing TRAFFIC reports and newsletters.

in the dying rhinos would fit in with an attack of anthrax. Outbreaks of the disease were recorded locally several decades ago.

The team also confirmed that the diet of the rhinos seems to have changed in recent years. "In 1967-70 we found that the rhinos were eating mostly saplings and small trees", Dr Schenkel observes, "but a study in 1979-80 showed that many vine species, pandanus leaves and even a mangrove tree were important parts of the rhino menu." This might indicate that the preferred food plants of the rhino have become scarcer due to changes in the Ujung Kulon ecosystem.

Dr Arne Schiotz, WWF International Director of Conservation, notes: "As part of the new WWF/IUCN Indonesia programme now being developed we may consider further studies of Javan rhino ecology. We may also explore the possibilities of limited habitat management or translocation of a part of the population, since we now have all our rhinos in a single area, and this could prove a threat to the survival of the species."

Dr Lee Talbot, IUCN Director-General, led the first conservation survey of the Javan rhino in 1955 and estimated the population as probably under 30. As a result of Indonesian government efforts and a WWF/IUCN project to protect the rhinos and their habitat, begun in 1967 and led by Dr Schenkel, the population had risen to about 60 last year.

## Mystery of Dead Javan Rhinos\*

Anthrax may have caused the recent mysterious deaths of five of the world's sixty remaining Javan rhinos, according to a WWF/IUCN specialist team which has just returned from investigating the situation in Indonesia.

Dr Rudolf Schenkel, of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Basel University and 1977 WWF Gold Medal winner, and his wife Dr Lotte Schenkel, teamed up with Indonesian WWF researcher Haerudin Sajudin in a month long emergency study at the invitation of the Indonesian government.

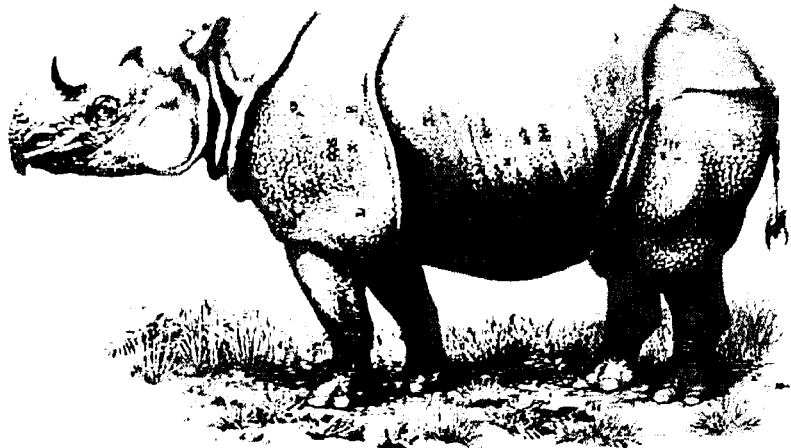
Septicaemia epizootica, a virus disease which may have been responsible for killing some 350 domestic goats and 50 buffaloes in villages adjoining Ujung Kulon National Park in November 1981, was first considered to be the cause of the rhino deaths. This possibility was later discounted, advises Professor Schenkel, since an epidemic of septicaemia in the national park would have affected banteng (wild cattle) more readily than rhinos; no dead banteng were found.

"We've ruled out poaching, since all the horns were intact", notes Dr Schenkel, who has studied the extremely rare Javan rhino since 1967.

\*Courtesy WWF/IUCN Information Service.

"Poisoning from toxic wastes dumped in the sea (rhinos occasionally drink sea water to obtain salt) is unlikely. We suspect the problem may be an endemic disease that was dormant and which became active under extreme climatic conditions."

Anthrax, or an anthrax-like disease, is suspected, since anthrax spores can remain dormant in the earth for decades and become active after heavy rains, such as the down-pour which recently drenched the isolated Ujung Kulon National Park, the only home of the Javan rhino. The symptoms indirectly observed



Rhinoceros sondaicus, Javan rhino, Courtesy: WWF/H. Diller