

ASIAN RHINO SPECIALIST GROUP ACTIVITIES

SUMATRAN RHINO NOW THE MOST ENDANGERED OF ALL RHINOS

The Sumatran Rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) is probably the most critically endangered of all the rhinoceros species.

It is true that the population of Javan Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is lower in numbers with only about 50 surviving in Indonesia and perhaps 10 + in Vietnam. However, the numbers of this species have been stable over the last few years in Indonesia.

It is also true that among the rhinoceros species, the rate of decline has been greatest in the African Black Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) whose population has decreased 85% over the last 10 years. However, there are still an estimated 2,400 Black Rhino in Africa; wild population numbers appear to have stabilized, and; there is a self-sustaining captive population.

In contrast, the population of Sumatran Rhino:

- is very low (fewer than 500)
- the rate of decline is high (at least 50% over the last 10 years)
- there is no indication the situation is stabilizing
- the captive population is not reproducing at all.

Prior to the end of 1993, estimates of the Sumatran rhino were 600-1000 world wide with about 420-875 in Indonesia. The more rigorous assessment of Indonesian populations conducted at the end of 1993 indicate that only 200-300 survive there. Consequently the world population is no more than and probably fewer than 500.

Hence, the AsRSG believes the Sumatran rhinoceros is the most critically endangered of all rhino species at this time.

AsRSG NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION SCHEDULE AND SUBMISSIONS

It is intended to publish the AsRSG Newsletter twice a year, in January and July. Members are encouraged and invited to submit items about Asian rhino conservation. The deadlines will be 15 December for the January issue and 15 June for the July issue.

TENTATIVE PLANS FOR NEXT AsRSG MEETING

The next meeting of the AsRSG is proposed for December 1995 or January 1996. Among sites being explored are Sabah and Sarawak. AsRSG members are requested to advise AsRSG Program Officer Tom Foose of time periodss that are feasible for them during December 1995 and January 1996.

NEW VERSION AsRSG ACTION PLAN

The revision of the AsRSG Action Plan, *ASIAN RHINOS: An Action Plan for Their Conservation*, will be published in early 1995 and will be available through the AsRSG Program Offices.

GOLDEN ARK AWARD TO AsRSG CHAIRMAN

AsRSG Chairman Mohd Khan bin Momin Khan received the Golden Ark Award provided Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands in a ceremony at the Royal Palace in The Hague on 29 October 1994. This award is conferred upon persons who have contributed significantly to wildlife conservation. In receiving this award, Mohd Khan becomes a member of a very select group of conservationists worldwide. Widodo Ramono, another active member of the AsRSG, has also been a recipient of this award.

IRF ASSISTS AsRSG

The International Rhino Foundation (IRF) has been providing financial support for the AsRSG and is serving as the administrative vehicle for funds contributed to the AsRSG.

AsRSG MEETING JALDAPARA

The IUCN/SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group (AsRSG) conducted a plenary meeting at Jaldapara Sanctuary, West Bengal India 6-11 December 1993. (Note: The Asian Rhino Specialist Group designates itself the AsRSG to distinguish its acronym from the African Rhino Specialist Group which AsRSG designates AfRSG). As part of this meeting, a population and habitat viability analysis (PHVA) workshop was also conducted to initiate this process as one of the tools for conservation of this species. The PHVA was conducted in collaboration with: the Wildlife Departments of Assam and West Bengal; the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India; Zoo Outreach Organization-CBSG India; IUCN SSC CBSG

Representatives from 10 countries including the 4 major range states (*) for Asian rhinos participated in these sessions: India *, Nepal *, Malaysia *, Indonesia *, Thailand, Singapore, Kenya, United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland. Unfortunately, representatives from Myanmar and Vietnam were unable to attend.

The major objectives of these sessions were to:

1. Review the status of all 3 species of Asian rhinos and confirm the latest estimates of numbers in the wild.
2. Assess the activities and accomplishments of the AsRSG over the last 6 years and develop priorities and directions for the next 3 years.
3. Revise the AsRSG Action Plan which was originally developed in 1987.
4. Recommend Changes in AsRSG Structure and Function for the 1994-1996 Triennium
5. Prepare a First Draft of Southeast Asian Rhino GEF Project Program Document which will provide US \$ 2 million for rhino conservation in Indonesia and Malaysia over the next 2 years.
6. Commence formulation of a Strategic Funding Plan for Asian Rhino Conservation
7. Initiate the PHVA process for *Rhinoceros unicornis*

The latest estimates of Asian rhino numbers are presented in the table on the back page of this Newsletter. The most notable and unsettling fact from these figures is the revelation that numbers of the Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) have now

declined to no more than 500. Previous estimates had been 700-1000. The decrease is attributable mostly to a 50% reduction in the numbers estimated for Sumatra in Indonesia. Although the Javan rhino is fewer in number and the African black rhino has perhaps decreased more precipitously over the last 10 years, the combination of low numbers and decline rate may render the Sumatran rhino now the most critically endangered of all rhino species on the planet.

There was also confirmation from the latest transect and photographic surveys in Ujung Kulon that numbers of the Javan rhino are approximately 50 as previous censuses and estimates had contended.

The Indian/Nepalese rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) remains the success story among Asian rhinos with the total population in India at about 1,450 and in Nepal at about 500. However, levels of poaching in both countries are significant and intensifying. In Assam, still the stronghold for this species, poaching in most of the protected areas for the species are estimated at around 5% per year. This level is approximately equivalent to the annual rates of population growth so that any further intensification will cause decline of the population. Indeed, such decline has already occurred in at least two areas with the population in Laokhowa being completely annihilated and the population in Manas reduced by at least 50%. (More recent but unofficial reports suggest perhaps all have been lost.)

Another major topic of discussion at the Jaldapara meeting was the great concern expressed by most of the Asian rhino conservationists in attendance that these species do not receive their fair share of attention or resources from the international rhino conservation community. It was emphasized that despite the drastic decline in African black rhino over the last decade, the numbers of that species was probably still no lower than the total of all 3 Asian rhino species combined.

In terms of structure and function, the AsRSG extensively discussed:

- (1) the activities, accomplishments, and problems over the last 10 years and
- (2) future objectives, needs, and function of the Group in relation to the challenges for Asian rhino conservation.

These activities and accomplishments include:

1984 Mohd Khan bin Momin Khan becomes Chairman representing the first range national to occupy this position.

A Conservation Strategy Session on Sumatran Rhino was developed at a meeting in Singapore.

The *Ex Situ* Program for Sumatran Rhino was initiated concurrently in Malaysia and Indonesia.

1986 A meeting of AsRSG was conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia.

1987 The AsRSG Asian Rhino Action Plan was formulated at a workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

1989 A PHVA Workshop was conducted for Javan Rhino in Bogor, Indonesia.

1990 A follow-up workshop in Bogor, Indonesia was co-sponsored by the AsRSG and PHPA to develop the Indonesian Rhino Conservation Strategy Workshop.

1992 The first Program Officer was appointed for AsRSG with financial support from the International Rhino Foundation (IRF).

The AsRSG Program Officer represented the AsRSG and the IUCN/SSC at the preparatory UNEP Rhino Conference.

As a result of that Conference, the AsRSG initiated the development of a Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project for \$ 2 million to assist implementation of the conservation strategy for rhinos in Indonesia and Malaysia.

1993 The AsRSG Program Officer assists with Preparation of Rhino Conservation Action Plans for Malaysia and Indonesia through a grant from UNEP.

The AsRSG participates in the full UNEP Rhino Conservation Conferences in Nairobi, Kenya.

In preparation for, and as a product of, this UNEP Rhino Conference, the AsRSG develops a

continuing process of compiling overviews of priority actions and required funds for Asian Rhino Conservation through the national rhino conservation action plans. This process will be the basis of a strategic funding plan developed by the AsRSG.

Continuation of development of the GEF Project and Grant of \$ 2 million on South East Asian Rhinos.

Organization and conduct of a full meeting of the AsRSG at Jaldapara, West Bengal, India.

Provision of technical and financial assistance with Population and Habitat Viability Analyses (PHVAs) for Sumatran Rhino in Indonesia and Indian Rhino in India.

In general, it was observed that traditionally the AsRSG, like other IUCN SSC Specialist Groups, had concentrated on technical information and advice. There was general agreement that the AsRSG needed to assume a more active role in advocacy and fund-raising for Asian rhino conservation.

In particular, it was agreed that the AsRSG would initiate a Newsletter to be published quarterly. (*The schedule has been modified to semi-annually.*)

There was then much discussion of the future structure and leadership of the AsRSG to facilitate achievement of the objectives. The purpose was to develop recommendations that the Chairman of the ASRSG could submit to the Chair of the SSC as he considers appointments for the next Triennium 1994-1996. A number of scenarios for Chairs, Deputy Chairs, and Program Officers were considered.

There was strong agreement that the two major regions where Asian rhinos occur, the Indian Sub-Continent and South-East Asia needed to be represented in the leadership of the ASRSG. Hence, there was strong agreement that there should be a Chairman and Deputy Chairman, with one position occupied by a person from South East Asia and the other from the Indian Sub-Continent. There was strong support for Mohd Khan to continue as the Chairman and consensus for Mr. S.C. Dey to become the Deputy Chair. (*Subsequently, Mr Effendy Sumardja was requested to continue as a Deputy Chair.*)

There was also agreement that it would be useful to expand the program officer function into more of a secretariat. Currently, this function has been provided by Dr. Tom Foose, resident outside the range states. An objective for the next Triennium will be to move this function to one or more Asians in one or more of the range states. In the meantime, it was recommended that a second program officer, Dr. Nico Van Strien, be appointed. A major activity of the program officers will be to assist fund-raising. Dr. Foose will concentrate on North America; Dr. Van Strien on Europe. Other administrative and technical functions will be divided between Foose and Van Strien by mutual agreement.

Objectives for the 1994-1996 IUCN Triennium include:

- *Initiation of Newsletter.*
- *Revision of the AsRSG Action Plan.*
- *Activation of GEF Project for SE Asian Rhino.*
- *Development of a Strategic Funding Plan.*

As a first step toward development of a strategic funding plan, the AsRSG devoted time at the Jaldapara meeting to improving definition of projects and estimation of their costs. The total cost estimated is approximately US \$ 57,000,000 with \$ 35,000,000 required from external donors by the range states.

- *Better publicity for the plight of Asian Rhinos.*

than in Assam where most Indian rhinos live for two major reasons. One was to direct attention to the protected areas for rhino in West Bengal which had not been explicitly discussed in the previous edition of the AsRSG Asian Rhino Action Plan. These protected areas are limited in rhino population and habitat area but are nevertheless being well managed and will be important for conservation of this species.

A more important reason was to emphasize that the rhino in India occurs not just in one, but in three states thus qualifying rhino conservation efforts eligible for financial support from the federal government. Current Government of India policy does not permit federal funds to be provided for species restricted to a single state. Assam had previously been receiving federal funds but they were discontinued when the new policy was enacted. Restoration of federal support is vital if Assam and the other states are to successfully respond to the intensifying challenge of the poachers. Indeed, it is an objective of the PHVA workshop to provide support for development of a Project Rhino by the Government of India, analogous to Project Tiger which has been so critical to the conservation of that species in India.

An extensive summary of both the AsRSG Meeting and the Indian Rhino PHVA has been published in ZOOS PRINT (Vol IX: No 3,4; March/April 1994) which is available from the AsRSG Program Office or ZOO Outreach Organization, Box 1683, Peelamedu, Coimbatore 641 004, Tamil Nadu, India.

AsRSG PRIORITY PROJECTS AND COSTS

The table below indicates estimates of the cost, in terms of both internal and external sources of funds, for rhino conservation over the next five years in the four major Asian rhino range states. Thereafter is presented the priority projects that range states have identified.

5 YEAR COSTS (U.S.\$) ASIAN RHINO CONSERVATION IN MAJOR RANGE STATES						
COUNTRY	CAPITAL		OPERATIONS		TOTAL	
	TOTAL	EXTERNAL	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
India	21,000,000	19,000,000	15,000,000	1,000,000	36,000,000	20,000,000
Nepal	255,000	255,000	2,500,000	1,000,000	2,755,000	1,255,000
Indonesia	3,445,000	3,445,000	6,840,800	4,514,000	10,285,300	7,959,000
Malaysia	4,464,000	2,739,000	4,051,000	1,893,000	8,515,000	4,632,000
Total	29,164,000	26,439,000	28,391,000	7,407,000	57,555,000	33,846,000

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Indonesia:

Rhino Desk Officer	472,000
Ujung Kulon Rhino Conservation Unit	922,500
Gunung Leuser Anti-Poaching Unit	1,391,600
Javan Rhino Translocation Study	347,000
Kerinci Seblat Anti-Poaching Unit	1,870,400
In Situ Intensive Mgmt & Captive Programmes	1,237,000
Barisan Selatan Anti-Poaching Unit	1,121,800
Sumatran Rhino Zoo Propagation	187,000

Malaysia:

Infrastructure Support for Rhino Units - Peninsula	966,000
Activation/Extension of Pulong Tau N.P. for Rhino	379,000
Rhino Conservation Coordination - Malaysia	115,000
Deputy Rhino Conservation Coordinator	88,000
Rhino & Habitat Surveillance - Peninsula	225,000
Rhino & Habitat Surveillance - Sarawak	90,000
Rhino Survey - Sabah	170,000
Rhino PHVA/GIS Workshops - Malaysia	70,000
Capture and Translocation of Rhino - Peninsula	184,000
Capture and Translocation of Rhino - Sabah	322,000
Intensive (Captive) Management - Peninsula	572,000
Gene Pool Project- Peninsular Malaysia	401,000
Captive Propagation Programme - Sabah	206,000
Internl Adviser-Intensive Management Programme	57,000

India:

Habitat Improvement & Management	2,245,000
Infrastructure Facilities & Antipoaching Measures	18,755,000
Veterinary & Other Intensive Care	495,000
Other Equipment, Training, Monitoring, Evaluation	965,000
Ecodevelopment Programme/Fringe Area	8,350,000
Translocation	500,000
Wildlife Tourism & Nature Appreciation	915,000
Contingencies	3,335,000

Nepal:

Environmental Monitoring	257,600
Anti-Poaching Units	189,600

Thailand:

Rhino Survey Training	1,388
Rhino Surveys	23,240

Myanmar:

Boundary Demarcation Tamanthi	5,000
Buildings & Roads	50,000
Transportation & Communication	155,000
Public Awareness	42,000
Planning & Anti-Poaching Force	18,000
Staff Equipment	32,000
Staff Welfare	30,000
Rhino Biology Studies	56,000
Institutional Development	10,000

Members are requested to review these priorities and advise the AsRSG Chariman and Program Officers of any adjustments.