



The Crash

IRKA Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 2

December 2007

Membership Update

The New Year will quickly be upon us so just a reminder that the International Rhino Keeper Association will begin implementation of membership fees starting January 1, 2008.

The categories to choose from are as follows:

Professional - \$25

Supporting Professional - \$20

Associates - \$15



The membership dues will be due at the beginning of each year starting on January 1, 2008. There will be a standard membership fee of \$15 for each category for those who wish to become members after August of each year. Please send check or money order made out to the International Rhino Foundation with a notation "for IRKA dues" along with a completed membership form which you will find on our website www.rhinokeepersassociation.org.

Please send your completed information to the address below:

International Rhino Keeper Association

Attn: Vickie Steele

C/O White Oak Conservation Center

581705 White Oak Rd

Yulee, FL 32097



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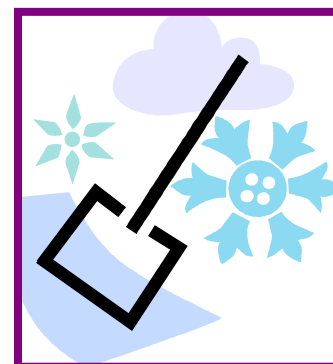
Let it Snow!



From the Editor

Happy Holidays everyone! I don't know about anyone else out there, but 2007 was not a kind year for me personally so I am ready to greet 2008 with open arms! As we reflect back on this past year we should all be very proud of what we have accomplished as a fledgling organization, and be thankful for the guidance and support we have been shown by individuals and institutions along the way. We hope to make many new colleagues in this new year, and welcome back many old friends! It is our hope that the IRKA will continue to grow this next year, and we can continue to be a source of excellence in resources, education and personal development.

Best wishes,
Christine Bobko



Facility Focus - The Caldwell Zoo : by Jade Tuttle

The Caldwell Zoo has been involved in eastern black rhino husbandry since an old elephant barn was renovated in (1980's). The barn holds five stalls arranged in a horseshoe pattern that connect to two adjoining yards. Within the middle of the ring of stalls is a raised viewing platform that remains open to the public during zoo hours. The center stall is equipped with a headgate where we are able to perform blood draws, foot care, dental checks and painting, which enables these sessions to be easily demonstrated to the public for education programs and special events. Between the two southern stalls and the exhibit yard is an elevated pad. It has two outside stalls connected by a chute with a built-in headgate where we give the rhinos their scrub-baths, collect milk, crate train, and have the potential to desensitize for ultrasonography - although we are not there yet. Last year each stall was fitted with elevated hay feeders that encourage a more natural browsing posture for the animals. Feeders were also added to the large thatch umbrellas that provide shade in each exhibit yard. As an added benefit, we've found the elevated feeders have also reduced wasted hay and saved the keepers time in cleaning. Apart from a few dents and scrapes where the rhinos "tested" the new apparatus, the animals seem pretty pleased with them as well.



Jumbe painting in head gate



Cornelius



Corny and Christa

The zoo's collection of rhinos started with 2.2 animals. Despite early trials and health issues which left just one breeding pair, our current female (Christa, 23) has had seven pregnancies and produced four healthy calves, the latest born just months ago on September 27th. Phineus was born at 3:30 in the afternoon and marked the end of a long, nervously-watched pregnancy after last year's miscarriage. He is a rambunctious 110 lb conglomeration of feet and head that keeps his mother, and us, rather tired-out. Although she was a willing participant in milk collection and blood draws just days before the new arrival, Christa's exceptional maternal instincts have kicked in and therefore she's been somewhat hesitant to resume training. We're getting her back, though, day by day and have collected blood for a post partum analysis. Aside from Christa and the calf we have two other males in our collection; Cornelius, who sired the calf at 29 years old, and Jumbe, who is the product of our last breeding five years ago. Caldwell is also excited about a second nine year old female named Kizuri who will be arriving from Brookfield in the coming weeks.



With two breeding pairs, there is a need to be conscientious about space. Although all our animals are brought inside and housed individually overnight they are usually in pairs during the day, either for breeding or as mother and calf. Due to space constraint we are cautious about introducing the male into the yard with our mother and calf. An attempt to imitate the mechanics of calf-dispersal in the wild is being discussed to ease this overcrowding some. Ideally, a calf would be introduced to the second (presumably bred) dam during weaning while the mother is reintroduced to the bull. However, it is still only a theory and in need of much more investigation. (If anyone has experiences or contacts, please be in touch!)

Inevitably there is still a rhino inside on most days. We take this opportunity to work with the animals on training, as time allows, and to educate the public with up-close and personal demonstrations. While there are some enrichment items on the yards (like tires, browse and boomer balls) our attention focuses on the time spent indoors where there are plenty of enrichment items, novel browse and food treats, and tactile interaction with the keepers. The rhinos are currently conditioned for most husbandry concerns, including the aforementioned phlebotomy, nail care, weighing, bathing and hand-vaccinations. With the addition of an extra position to our department this fall, we are hoping the extra hands and time will allow us to pursue a more formal training regiment. Future goals include preparing both females for palpation and sonographic imaging, an open mouth for dental exams, and foot presentations.



Yard and feeders



Indoor stall and feeder



Head gate

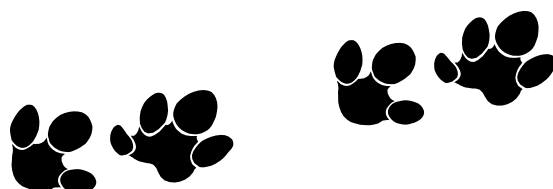


Public presentations

Work has just begun conditioning our month old calf to the chute, a scale platform, and tactile stimulation from keepers in preparation to give something back to those rhinos in the wild. Information on the weight, age and spoor size is being collected from our calf, Phineus as part of a collaborative research project with the Zambezi Society, Zimbabwe. The aim of the project is to develop a field tool in the form of a 'spoor ruler' that can then be used to estimate an individual's age and weight in the field, using only the spoor, or foot print. The 'spoor ruler' will be a valuable *in situ* tool for two very important areas of management. Firstly it can be used to assist with the determination of population recruitment and surveys without having to disturb the rhinoceros in the field, especially when dealing with a mother and calf, and secondly it can be used by an APU to inform a veterinarian of the probable age and weight of a rhino, when determining the drug dosage during a field immobilization exercise. This collaboration builds on preliminary results collected from seven black rhinoceros from an *in situ* environment and can only be strengthened by additional data. If any facility has questions or the opportunity to assist feel free to be intouch or contact the Zambezi Society home page.



Chute training



The Asian Rhino Project : by Kerry Crosbie

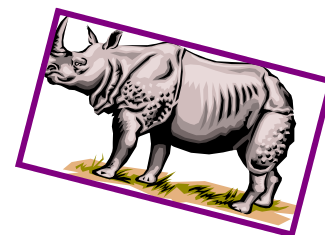


Introducing the Asian Rhino Project

The Indian Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis* - population 2,619), The Sumatran Rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* - population 275) and the Javan Rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus* - population 40-60) are all seriously endangered due to rampant poaching and habitat loss caused by human encroachment. Poached for their horn, the rhino are caught by snares, pit traps, poisoned or electrocuted by wires hung from overhanging power lines. The horn is used in traditional Chinese medicines and in Yemen to make dagger handles. The illegal trade in wildlife is second only to the trade in illegal drugs and firearms and is the primary threat to rhino in Asia. Illegal logging and human encroachment due to agriculture is seeing the rapid destruction of Asia's forest and all its inhabitants. Conservation of this flagship species in the wild not only ensures there will be rhino around for future generations, but will also assist to ensure the survival of other threatened species of Asia's rainforests such as the orangutan, Asian elephant, tiger, rafflesia flower and many, many more. But we have to act now!

The Asian Rhino Project (ARP) is an Australian non-profit, volunteer organization raising awareness and support for the three Asian rhino species. By actively seeking funding from donors, corporate sponsors and memberships, merchandise sales and funds raised through events and educational programs; we contribute to programs in-situ through partnerships formed with conservation organizations in the field. Strong relationships are formed with conservation specialists through our active role in conservation workshops and positions on conservation boards such as the Sumatran rhino Global Management Propagation Board, the IUCN Species Specialist Group and the more recently formed Indonesian Rhino Foundation. We work together with these people to achieve outcomes as a united force with our partners. The ARP was founded in 2003 by a small group of Zoo Keepers in Australia who were keen to do the best they could to raise awareness and provide support for the three Asian rhino species. Perth Zoo rhino keeper Kerry Crosbie learnt about the plight of the Asian rhinos whilst researching information about the rhino in her care. She was appalled at how low the rhino populations were and at the little success conservationists and Zoos had in trying to turn the numbers around. Even more upsetting was the fact that no one knew much about these rhinos even though they were on Australia's doorstep. Something had to be done and so the Asian Rhino Project began!

In November 2003, a devastating event occurred. One of the four captive breeding program centers (Sungai Dusun Sumatran Rhino Breeding Center) lost their whole population of captive Sumatran Rhino due to a devastating illness which wiped them out within two weeks. The current captive population of this species then stood at 8. Not a great record from a population of 40 founding individuals. After hearing the news of this terrible disaster and learning more about the plight of the Sumatran Rhino, ARP Patron Peter Hall contacted us and wanted to help. He donated \$10,000 immediately to assist us in our mission and has continued to contribute to Sumatran Rhino conservation ever since. His company Hunter Hall Investment Management Limited is now our major corporate sponsor. With them on board, the Asian Rhino Project has been able to grow.

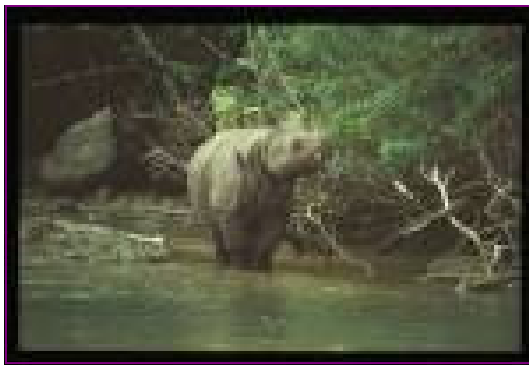


Indian rhino courtesy of Brooke Squires

This last financial year we were proud to be able to contribute over \$341,000 of funding to Asian rhino conservation.

Achievements in the last year have included:

- 2 year funding commitment to the Javan Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) in Vietnam
- further support for the SOS Rhino RPUs in Borneo (Sumatran Rhino)
- funding for a volunteer coordinator position for SOS Rhino Tabin Wildlife Reserve Ecotourism Project
- financial support for a Sumatran rhino survey in Kerinci Seblat National Park, Sumatra
- the development of an ARP Specialist Veterinary Support Team providing emergency assistance to programs
- funding of a rhino boma at Manas National Park in India for the release and relocation of rescued rhinos
- funding a bufferzone community program at Chitwan NP "Empowering People for Rhino Conservation" in Nepal
- ongoing support and funding for the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas NP, Sumatra
- further financial support for the International Rhino Foundation 'Rhinoceros Conservation Medicine Program'



Javan rhino courtesy of Alain Compost

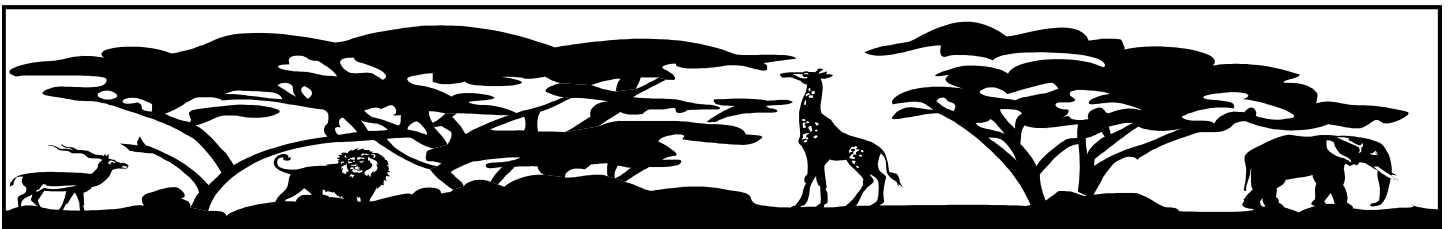


Sumatran rhino courtesy of David Jenike

We have redeveloped our website and launched a new fundraising program 'Adopt A Rhino' while continuing our regular fund raising events. The ARP now has three offices within Australia (NT, WA and NSW) with the head office operating from the NT. ARP Patron Peter Hall and his company Hunter Hall Investment Management Ltd has continued its outstanding support for Asian rhino conservation which provides funding for the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary and Rhino Conservation Medicine Program as well as covers all ARP operational costs. This support ensures that all funds raised by the ARP are directly committed to the Conservation of these flagship species.

We welcome members from far and wide; your support is vital for us to continue our important work. We guarantee that your financial support assists with spreading the word about the plight of Asian rhinos, and contributes to their in situ conservation. So please; if you can; donate today, become a member or adopt a rhino and help us help them!

For further information on us, and to learn about our important projects, please visit our website www.asianrhinos.org.au or contact Kerry Crosbie - e-mail info@asianrhinos.org.au phone +61 8 89760952.



Institutional Supporters

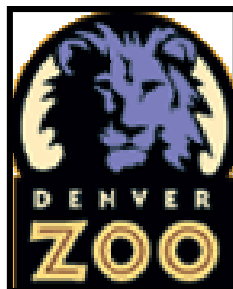
The Supporting Institutional Membership is for any conservation organization , or zoological institution which supports rhino conservation in accordance with the objectives and purpose of the IRKA. These memberships are available for \$100, \$500 and \$2000. Why should your zoo be interested in joining on this level? If your institution contributes on the \$500 level then all rhino keepers membership fees at your zoo are waived! It is important that as the IRKA grows that we continue to garner the support from all facilities that are responsible for the protection and management of all species of rhinoceros. We would like to extend our appreciation for this substantial support to the following institutions, and hopefully we can add your zoo to this growing list! If you have questions about institutional memberships or any other questions please contact us at

internationalrhinokeeperassoc@gmail.com.

Past Institutional Sponsors



2008 Sponsors at the \$500 level





2008 Sponsors at the \$100 level



2008 Sponsor at the \$2000 level



The IRKA board members would like to extend our deepest thanks to White Oak Conservation for graciously continuing their support by hosting our bi-annual officers meeting at their beautiful facilities!

