

Species

Newsletter of the Species Survival Commission

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The World Conservation Union

From the Specialist Groups

African rhino

The African Rhino Specialist Group (AfrSG) re-assessed the overall status and management of Africa's rhinos at its eighth meeting held in Swaziland from 27 June to 2 July 2006, and while continued progress was reported at the species level for both white and black rhinos, the status of two subspecies is extremely critical

White and black rhino numbers had grown to 14,540 and 3,725 respectively by the end of 2005, representing increases of 92.3% (white) and 54.6% (black) since 1995 - the year that the decline in black rhino numbers had plateaued at an all-time low of 2,410. This represents a net per annum increase of 6.6% and 4.5% respectively for white and black rhino over the last decade.

However, recent trends vary between subspecies, with the two rarest rhino taxa faring particularly badly. A recent survey within the last known range of the West African black rhino (*Diceros bicornis longipes*) in northern Cameroon has failed to locate any sign of their continued presence although many signs of rhino poaching were recorded. Dr Isabelle and Jean-Francois Lagrot spent four months in early 2006 covering 2,500 kms on patrol without success, and enquiry amongst 21 hunting guides also drew a blank. While Paul Bour of Association Symbiose

will be in Cameroon till the end of 2006 checking reports from the field, the outlook for the subspecies does not look good. In a similar vein, recent intensive surveys of the last remaining wild northern white rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) in Garamba National Park, DR Congo, have located only four individuals (two

adult males, one adult female and one sub-adult of unknown sex). Modelling should give a realistic assessment of the probability of this remnant population surviving in the long term and this will be an important consideration at the strategic planning workshop being planned by DRC's Institute Congolaise pour la Conservation pour la Nature (ICCN) and African Parks Foundation for sometime after DRC's follow-up elections in late 2006.

The trend in numbers for the other subspecies is up, with black rhinos increasing in the wild to 1,865 southern-central *D.b. minor*, 1,220 south-western *D.b. bicornis* and 640 eastern *D.b. michaeli*; and the southern white rhino (*C.s. simum*) increasing rapidly to almost 14,540. There are also a further

760 white rhino (750 southern and 10 northern) and 240 black (171 eastern and 69 southern-central) in zoos and other intensively-managed facilities worldwide.

In addition to numerous presentations and discussions on international initiatives, recent successful rhino introduction and management strategies, rhino support programmes and new management techniques at the AfrSG meeting, a series of workshops was held. Good progress was made towards developing a framework and terms of reference for the proposed East African Community Rhino Management Group to enhance the metapopulation management of the eastern black rhino; and also a format and process for drafting IUCN Species Survival Commission guidelines for rhino translocations. Agreement was also reached on the process and content for the delivery of reports on the status and management of African rhinos required by CITES Standing Committee 54 and CoP 14. Further progress with examining community-based rhino conservation models was made.

Martin Brooks, Chair

Amphibian

Important amphibian habitat safeguarded and launch of ASG website

The Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG) has built upon a recent success safeguarding critical amphibian habitat in Colombia through the protection of another important site in the Central Cordillera. La Forzosa is home to seven vulnerable, four endangered and five newly discovered amphibian species and represents the largest forest fragment in the Central Corillera, an area ravaged by rampant gold-mining in the early 20th century and largely devoid of suitable forest habitat. Although 150 ha of the forest fragment were purchased by the local environmental authority in 1999, this has not been expanded and remains unprotected. The ASG has teamed up with the American Bird Conservancy to help ProAves, a local NGO, secure the remaining 1,250 acres to consolidate the protection of this critical site and establish a research station, forest guard and reserve director, trail network and an amphibian research and monitoring programme.

The ASG has launched a website (www.amphibians.org) which serves as a portal for information relating to global amphibian conservation, research and assessment. The bi-monthly newsletter *Froglog* is available for free on the website.

Robin D. Moore

A recent survey within the last known range of the West African black rhino in northern Cameroon has failed to locate any sign



News Round-up

West African black rhino feared extinct

While most subspecies of Africa's two rhinos, the black and white rhino, continue on the road to recovery, this is not true for two of Africa's most threatened rhino subspecies: the West African black *Diceros bicornis longipes* and the northern white *Ceratotherium simum cottoni*. The West African black rhino is now feared extinct and numbers of the northern white rhino have reached an all time low in the wild. In both cases, poaching for rhino horn is the main cause of their demise.

Full story:

http://www.iucn.org/en/news/archive/2006/07/7_pr_rhino.htm

Amphibian global action team needed to avoid an extinction catastrophe

The formation of an Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA), to co-ordinate global conservation plans for amphibians in the face of the threat of a massive extinction catastrophe has been called for by a group of the world's foremost amphibian experts, in the latest edition of the journal *Science*. The IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) would head the new ASA and have an initial five-year budget of \$400 million.

Full story:

http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/news/2006_articles/amphibian_action_team.htm

Conservation of a coral reef giant – the humphead wrasse

The IUCN SSC Groupers and Wrasses Specialist Group is playing a central role in the development of a sustainable management plan for the humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) fishery. A highly prized food fish, over-fishing is having a serious impact on many populations and it was added to Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2004. Following its listing, the IUCN Groupers and

Wrasses Specialist Group was contracted by the CITES Secretariat to develop a sustainable management plan (Non-Detriment Findings), based on trade, fishing and population surveys in the field. Their findings have recently been published in two reports; with a third due out in 2007.

Full story:

http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/news/2006_articles/Humphead_wrasse_report.htm

Fencing spells disaster for the last of China's Przewalski's gazelles

China's only endemic antelope, the Przewalski's gazelle (*Procapra przewalskii*) is in imminent peril as less than 300 animals remain. The SSC Sir Peter Scott Fund for Conservation Action has supported a population and habitat survey undertaken by Dr Zhigang Jiang of the IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group. The study aims to identify the reasons for its decline and the conservation measures needed to save it. The area inhabited by the gazelle is heavily grazed by sheep and the introduction of extensive fencing in 1994 has had a very detrimental impact: less than 300 gazelles have to compete with over 3 million livestock and fencing has made things a lot worse.

Full story:

http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/news/2006_articles/Przewalski%27s_gazelle.htm

SSC crane expert receives Indianapolis Zoo Conservation Award

In honour of more than 30 years of dedication to saving endangered crane species, the Indianapolis Zoo awarded the inaugural \$100,000 Indianapolis Prize, to George Archibald, Chair of the IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group. It is the largest international monetary award given to an individual for conservation of a single animal species. George Archibald's work includes everything from dancing with human-reared cranes to enhance fertilization, to promoting a programme to re-establish a migratory flock of Whooping cranes in eastern North America by teaching juvenile cranes to follow ultralight aircraft from Wisconsin to Florida.

Full story:

<http://www.savingcranes.org/award/index.cfm>



The humphead wrasse *Cheilinus undulatus*