



MISSION

Possible

By Dr. Terri Roth



The Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden's first born Sumatran rhino, Andalas (original name of Sumatra), was moved to his ancestral homeland of Sumatra, Indonesia, with a clear mission - to save his species from extinction. Andalas, the first Sumatran rhinoceros born in captivity in over 112 years, now is also the first Sumatran rhino ever to be translocated from the U.S. to Indonesia in an effort to reinforce the captive breeding program.

Andalas' 60-hour trek which included a transatlantic flight from his home at the Los Angeles Zoo, overnight ferry and overland lorry ride with a convoy of officials, conservationists and animal care staff, was a huge success. Upon arrival at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) on Sumatra, Andalas was met with great celebration as the hairy, five-year-old rhino was escorted to a netted, open-air, temporary quarantine pen in a lush forest.

To send such a valuable and endangered animal back to its country of origin when it was one of just four Sumatran rhinos in the entire U.S. is unprecedented. Ideally, zoos with small populations of endangered species intensively manage and breed them until a

vigorous, self-sustaining population is achieved before individuals are sent abroad for reintroduction to the wild or to bolster other breeding programs. However, the Sumatran rhino captive population is so small (just nine animals in captivity worldwide) and the gene pool so limited, the luxury of waiting for the population to achieve large numbers simply doesn't exist. Therefore, both Los Angeles and Cincinnati Zoos who are partners in this program, agreed to send Andalas. Besides, Center for Conservation and Research of Endangered Wildlife (CREW) scientists knew there was another male calf well on its way inside the pregnant female rhino at the Cincinnati Zoo. That calf, "Harapan" ("hope" in Indonesian), was born April 2007, and is growing rapidly at the Cincinnati Zoo.

Emi and Ipuh, the only successful captive Sumatran rhino breeding pair in the world were sent to the U.S. as youngsters by the Indonesian government as part of a Sumatran Rhino Trust Agreement developed in the mid 1980s between Indonesia and four U.S. zoos (Cincinnati, Bronx, Los Angeles and San Diego). At the SRS, experts hope Andalas serves as a catalyst for their program. The SRS staff incorporated the technology developed by CREW scientists at Cincinnati into its management practices, but has yet to achieve a pregnancy in their elder rhino pair. However, the recent rescue of two young female rhinos that wandered out of the forest and into danger, offers the SRS (and Andalas) the perfect opportunity to finally succeed in its mission to breed this amazing species.

Considered one of the most endangered mammalian species on earth, approximately 70 percent of the Sumatran rhino population has been lost in the last two decades due to poaching for their horns that are believed to contain medicinal properties by some Asian cultures. Today, a population of less than 275 animals exists in isolated pockets of Malaysia and Indonesia. The Cincinnati and Los Angeles Zoos



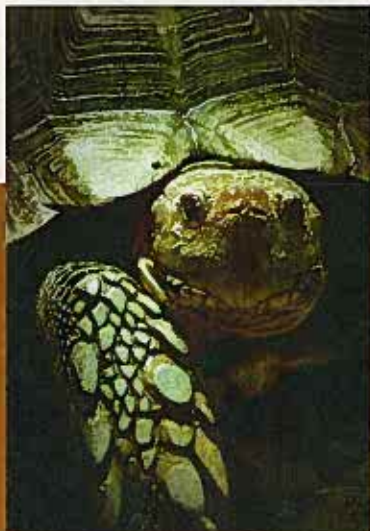


work closely with the International Rhino Foundation to protect this venerable species in its home range. However, the continued loss of animals in the wild makes the success of the captive breeding program essential.

Thankfully, Andalus is rapidly adapting to his new environment and appears to be in the final stages of maturation. He has gained over 200 lbs since arriving at the SRS and is starting to show behaviors typical of an adult Sumatran rhino male when introduced to

his intended young mates. It was hard to see Andalus leave the U.S., but sending him to Sumatra clearly was the right thing to do for the breeding program and, ultimately, the survival of the species.

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In Focus



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SPECIES: AFRICAN SPURRED TORTOISE

AZA Institution: Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration

Although it is native to the Sahara desert, the African spurred tortoise may be more commonly found in backyards throughout the world. This tortoise is quite popular in the pet trade and that has contributed to its vulnerable status in the wild. AZA zoos and aquariums have developed outreach programs to encourage responsible pet ownership by informing the public that exotic animals – such as the African spurred tortoise, which can surpass 200 pounds and live for more than 100 years – do not make good pets.

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