



SOS Rhino Borneo Activities: 1 July to 30 September 2008

This has been a busy and exciting period for SOS Rhino Borneo, with several important happenings.

Most significant of all, on 3 August, a lone Sumatran Rhino, one of the very few remaining isolated individuals trapped in Sabah's fragmented jungles, wandered out of its small patch of forest and made its way into an adjacent oil palm estate.

Sabah Wildlife Department veterinarians and rangers, together with field staff from SOS Rhino Borneo and WWF-Malaysia, rushed to the estate to find and then continuously monitor the adult male rhino, who was in his prime and sporting a magnificent front horn, but who had a snare injury on his front ankle.

After ten days, it was clear that Kretam or 'Tam', (named after Kretam Forest Reserve where he lived) had no intention of returning to the forest, was slightly lame, and had no fear of humans. The wildlife authorities made the decision that, since there was no end in sight to monitoring Tam, and it was unsafe to ever abandon him, the only course of action was to move him to a safer site.

On 13 August, Tam was successfully coaxed into a crate and taken by road to Tabin Wildlife Reserve where he is being kept in a small paddock. He is receiving veterinary care and round the clock monitoring. A 2 hectare extension to the paddock is being built, under natural forest cover.

Helping with this vital work are SOS Rhino Borneo staff Alexter, Hardi, Janice, Rajimah, Norita and Augustine, who are working alternate day and night time shifts to guard him, as well as help with gathering food from the forest, and assisting government staff with

monitoring, feeding, cleaning and data recording.

The hope is that Tam can be transferred as soon as possible to a more natural enclosure in nearby forest at Tabin, where SOS Rhino Borneo will continue to play a critical role in monitoring and protection. Given Tam's background now, it is considered too risky to allow him to be released into the wild. Plans are being developed for a long-term program involving a large fenced sanctuary well inside the Wildlife Reserve.

Also in August, SOS Rhino Borneo hosted Dr. Susie Ellis and Dr. Robin Radcliffe of International Rhino Foundation during their trip to Tabin, where they saw firsthand the hard work SOS Rhino Borneo staff is putting into looking after Tam in his enclosure, while Dr Radcliffe was able to give veterinary advice on Tam's injured foot.

Dr. Dedi Candra from the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas, Sumatra then visited Tabin in September and provided the benefit of his eight year experience of caring for Sumatran rhinos under forest conditions, not only to SOS Rhino Borneo staff but also government staff and WWF working at Tabin.

Patrolling and monitoring of Tabin Wildlife Reserve and its wild rhinos continued to be carried out during July - September, with the sighting of a (probably female) rhino by one of the Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) teams on August 20th. The team succeeded in taking photos of the Rhino as well as obtaining dung samples and footprint measurements. The area inhabited by this rhino is under regular and frequent monitoring.

A recent development has been the revival of a Staff Improvement Program, so that field staff will be better



Sumatran Rhinoceros translocation

able to communicate with researchers, scientists and visitors to Tabin Wildlife Reserve. Subjects include basic English, Maths, Science and General Knowledge, including learning about rainforest biology and ecology.

Collaboration with other organizations involved in Rhino conservation in Sabah continued to prosper and on August 28th, Alexter and France (one of the RPU leaders) represented SOS Rhino Borneo at the opening ceremony of a law enforcement base, built and manned by Sabah Forestry Department on the south side of Tabin Wildlife Reserve.

Meanwhile SOS Rhino Borneo RPU staff benefitted from capacity building at the Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Project (KOCP) in Sukau in eastern Sabah, where they received training in environmental education and awareness, wildlife research techniques,

and wildlife warden activities.

Support from ARP has helped to enable SOS Rhino Borneo to recruit three new staff for the RPU teams, who reported for duty on 5 October. This now brings the total of SOS Rhino Borneo staff in the field to 15, and allows us to not only do routine patrol and monitoring of wild rhinos, but also play a significant role in caring for and guarding Tam.

Although such duties were never planned or imagined just a few months ago, SOS Rhino Borneo takes the view that we have to do absolutely everything possible to help save the Bornean sub-species from extinction. Tam seems healthy and alert, and he represents a bird in the hand, which may indeed in the future prove to be worth two in the bush.

Article and photos: Sylvia Yorath

WWF Camera Traps, Ujung Kulon NP, Indonesia

The suitable cameras for the Javan rhino survey using camera traps operation have been ordered and should arrive before the end of November.

The WWF team decided to purchase video trap cameras also which will be capable of capturing movie clips as well as still captures for analysis of behavior of the Javan rhino in addition to identification.

Unfortunately, the installment of these cameras will take much longer than anticipated, as the cameras need to be assembled prior to the shipment. It is anticipated that the Javan rhino survey will commence mid-December 2008.

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