

Oryx

The International Journal of Conservation

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<http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>

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The Society was founded in 1903 as the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, and subsequently named the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. Fauna & Flora International is conserving the planet's threatened species and ecosystems – with the people and communities who depend on them.

Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation, is now published quarterly by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Fauna & Flora International. It is a leading scientific journal of biodiversity conservation, conservation policy and sustainable use, with a particular interest in material that has the potential to improve conservation management and practice.

The website, <http://www.oryxthejournal.org/>, plays a vital role in the journal's capacity-building work. Amongst the site's many attributes is a compendium of sources of free software for researchers and details of how to access Oryx at reduced rates or for free in developing countries. The website also includes extracts from Oryx issues 10, 25 and 50 years ago, and a gallery of research photographs that provide a fascinating insight into the places, species and people described in the journal.

The [Rhino Resource Center](#) posted this PDF in June 2009. We are grateful for the permission.

travel widely. The first course spent some time in the Gir Forest, home of India's sole surviving lions, which has many practical problems and lessons for the enquiring student of wildlife management.

The last tigers in Pakistan are to be found in the Sunderbans, an area of mangrove swamps and jungle in East Pakistan; this was one of the areas proposed for a national park by the Mountfort WWF expedition in 1968. Unfortunately the tigers there have taken to

**Problem
Tigers in the
Sunderbans**

man-eating—no doubt because their own prey (axis deer) has decreased and a woodman or a honey-gatherer, even a fisherman in a boat, is an easy target—the tigers will swim out to a boat. To find the solution for this problem the Survival Service Commission decided to initiate a study of the tigers and recently Dr. Paul Leyhausen, Chairman of SSC's Cat Group, visited the Sunderbans, had valuable talks with the government, and paved the way for the research study to be carried out by Dr. Hendrichs. The East Pakistan government's plans are for two areas in the Sunderbans, both close to the Bay of Bengal and each about 50 square miles, to be set aside as strict nature reserves with no access except for management and research workers. Adjoining both areas will be two national parks of 120 and 70 square miles respectively. The remainder of the Sunderbans, about 3000 square miles, will be declared as a game reserve, with selective, strictly controlled timber working, fishery and hunting in areas to be changed each year according to the game wardens' recommendations.

The demand for its horn is the real cause of the depleted state of the Sumatran rhino population in Sabah, says John MacKinnon, who has just returned from a ten-month stay, most of which he spent in the jungle. He estimates numbers in Sabah at fewer than 100. The rhinos favour hilly areas in eastern Sabah, and prefer the secondary forest where the

**Stop the
Rhino Horn
Merchants**

upper canopy is broken and the smaller shrubs, canes and vines on which they feed are more numerous. For this reason deforestation is not such a serious threat to the rhinos just because they prefer the secondary growth; in fact logging may even help them by encouraging this secondary growth. Unfortunately, the rhinos habitually return to favourite haunts, such as mud wallows, at regular intervals, and skilled hunters make good use of the fact. On the Sagama river where rhinos were formerly common and much hunted by the Dusun people they are now so rare that there is little hunting at all, but there are still the few expert trackers who can find the occasional animal—and John MacKinnon found these trackers' paths in the areas where he had found the most rhino tracks. When they do get a rhino they can expect to make M\$2000 from the Chinese merchants in Tawan and Sandakan out of one rhino. (A man's daily pay from a job would be of the order of M\$5). With such prices someone is always willing to risk the penalties of taking a protected animal and the only hope of stopping the trade (and the killing), says John Mackinnon,

is to attack the market. 'The conviction of a couple of merchants for buying the horns would be far more effective than convicting the poachers'. Logging, however, is very far from helping the orang utans; indeed it is a serious threat to them. Sabah is exporting £1 million-worth of timber a week to Japan and timber exploitation is on a vast scale. Most orangs are in the forest reserves but this, says John MacKinnon, does not mean security, for the reserves are scheduled to be logged at a controlled rate. The only safe population is the small one on Mount Kinabalu (a national park) and those in the excellent Sepilok scheme (described on page 389); so there is urgent need to declare a new reserve. Once again tourism, carefully planned, might provide the answer. Wild orang utans could be as big a draw as chimpanzees in Africa, and the prospect of tourist revenue might induce the government to support the plan for an orang utan sanctuary.

One of the main surviving populations of the Sumatran rhinoceros is in the Loeser Reserve in northern Sumatra. Following a three months' survey there last summer, Dr. Fred Kurt estimated, from the reports of local hunting guides, that there was a minimum of 28 in the reserve with a possible 30 more in areas where the guides were afraid to go. He never saw a rhino, but he did see rhino traps, and illegal hunting he reckons is intensive. The traps were laid especially in areas frequented by female rhinos. Of the 33 areas in North Sumatra and Adjeh where rhinos still survive, only seven are inside the reserve; seven are in areas of so far untouched primary forest, but eighteen are on the edge of the reserve or in areas belonging to timber concessions where none are likely to survive unless they can be moved. Orang utans also are more numerous outside the reserve than in: about one third are estimated to be inside, the remainder in areas of shifting cultivation or timber concessions; many miserable captives are also kept by villagers in very poor, often horrible conditions. A considerable rescue programme is needed for both rhinos and orang utans, both highly endangered species: more sanctuaries, careful planning of timber extraction so that there are no isolated pockets of either animal, and rehabilitation centres for each species.

**Rhinos and
Orang Utans
in Sumatra**

**Search for
Monk Seal
Caves**

'The entire Mediterranean monk seal population probably does not exceed 500 animals', says the Red Data Book of IUCN and gives it a red sheet to indicate 'in danger of extinction'. Last summer the Italian Appeal of the World Wildlife Fund started a research programme to find out what measures would ensure its conservation in Sardinia. In grottoes round the Sardinian coast the seals still find refuges and breeding places, but many of these are becoming so disturbed, especially by tourists, that the seals are unlikely to stay. WWF has financed two surveys, one of all the grottoes in the Gulf of Orosei by the Speleological Group of Piedmont, including the famous and much visited Grotto of the Sea Ox (del Bue Marino), to find