

Sumatra:

Rosa and Ratu desperately seeking fertile male Sumatran rhino

Recently two young female rhinos were rescued from non-viable and threatening situations and were moved to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) in Way Kambas National Park (NP), Sumatra, Indonesia.

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The first rhino, called Rosa, is a young female from Bukit Barisan Selatan NP (BBS) that had become habituated to people and was venturing more and more out of the Park into the villages and fields, sometimes as far as 30 kms. Since early 2004 she had been under intensive protection from the Rhino Protection Units (RPU) in BBS. Two units were permanently assigned to guard this rhino, which proved too large a drain on RPU resources, which also need to protect the other 60-80 rhinos in BBS.

In September 2005 it was therefore decided to guide Rosa into a temporary enclosure in BBS to prevent her from roaming around and to prepare her for the move to the SRS. After she was crate-trained and cleared of harmful parasites and infections, she was moved to the SRS in the night of 25/26 November 2005.

This movement of Rosa was a carefully planned operation; however the movement of a second young female rhino, called Ratu, was the result of an emergency "search and rescue" operation near Way Kambas NP.

Before daybreak on 20 September 2005 a rhino was spotted wandering around a village in the vicinity of the southern boundary of Way Kambas NP. Fortunately, a Park guard was living nearby and he immediately alerted Park headquarters and the police, and formed a small team to protect the rhino and guide it back into the Park.

By noon it became clear that it would be impossible to guide the animal back because of the large crowds gathering to



Ratu applying a mud mask whilst wallowing in her bath!

see the rhino, a species unknown to most people. The rhino had also started to show signs of exhaustion and it was decided to enclose the rhino in a makeshift boma for protection, and then to move her to the SRS.

Just 12 hours after the rhino was first spotted, she arrived safely in the SRS. The rhino showed signs of severe stress, dehydration and exhaustion suffered from capture myopathy, and was badly sunburned.

Why the rhino left the security of the Park is unknown; intensive disturbance by illegal loggers and encroachers in the fringe areas of the Park may have been contributing factors. Equally, as Ratu is a sub-adult, she may just have got lost in her search for a new territory.

Temporary bomas were constructed for both females to let them adapt to the new environment and recover from the stress of capture and transport, and to allow



Rosa puckering up for the camera!

2 young female Sumatran Rhinos WLTM horny fertile male bachelor for meaningful, lasting relationship.

them to be examined by SRS and International Rhino Foundation vets. Rosa left the boma after about two months and very soon Ratu will also be allowed to go into her permanent enclosure. Each rhino in the SRS has about 20 Ha of lush, tropical forest. This is obviously much less than the 1,000-5,000 Ha that they would occupy in the wild, but it provides natural food for part of their diet, a natural climate, plenty of cover and ample opportunity for wallowing.

Both Ratu and Rosa are sub-adult rhinos that have not fully reached sexual maturity, and it may take some time before they can be successfully joined with a male. The single male in the SRS, Torgamba (who lived for some years at Port Lympne Wild Animal Park in Kent, until he was repatriated), is not an ideal partner as he is quite old and he has never successfully bred. The sub-adult male Andalas (born to Emi in Cincinnati Zoo, currently residing in Los Angeles Zoo, would be a much more desirable groom.