

Water filters enhance rhino protection

The Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) programme was initiated in Indonesia in response to the catastrophic decline in Sumatran rhino numbers. It works to strengthen the protection and management of the National Parks. RPUs exist in Bukit Barisan Selatan and Way Kambas National Parks in Sumatra, and Ujung Kulon National Park in Java.

Sugondo and Sectionov (Inov)

Rhino Protection Unit programme, Way Kambas National Park

My name is Sugondo and I have been a member of the Way Kambas Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) for ten years. I live in a local village near Way Kambas National Park and was recruited to join the RPU through a special selection and training process. Our RPU consists of four people and we spend 20 days each month on patrol in the forest. When we are on patrol, we make camp in the forest each night, near the river, and make rice and coffee or tea for dinner. We have to

use water from the river to drink and cook, because carrying water with us would be too hard and too expensive.

In Indonesia we have a rainy season and a dry season. During the rainy season, we can find fresh, clean water to drink, but during the dry season, it is very hard to find fresh water. The water we have to use during the dry season is often muddy and polluted, but we have no choice - we have to use that water. Every dry season, at least one or two members of the RPU become sick from drinking the dirty water, and miss patrol days. This is bad for us, and bad for the rhinos!



Above and below: The Rhino Protection Units make regular use of the water filters donated by SRI



IMAGES: RHINO PROTECTION UNIT PROGRAMME

In March 2009, Save the Rhino donated 20 water purifiers to our Sumatran RPUs. Each unit now carries a water purifier with them on patrol. They are very practical and easy to operate. Now we can easily turn muddy, polluted water into clean water that is safe to drink, and we don't get sick anymore. Having the water purifiers also means we don't have to spend as much time looking for fresh water and can spend more time doing surveys and patrols.

Thank you, Save the Rhino!

Thanks!

Our thanks in turn to the Mark Leonard Trust, which gave us a grant of just over £1,000, to buy water filters for the RPUs. This followed a visit by Trustee Mark Sainsbury to Indonesia, when he met and talked with members of the patrol teams. Our thanks also to Peter Bernstorff of Vestergaard Fransen, which makes the Life-Straw system we purchased, for making the kits available at a special rate.

We would also like to thank Chester Zoo, which gave us a grant of £4,191 for ongoing running costs (salaries etc) of the Rhino Protection Unit programme in Sumatra. We're deeply grateful for their ongoing support.

Asian Rhinos a speciality

Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar

Chair - IUCN SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group, Secretary General - Aaranyak, Asian Rhino Coordinator - International Rhino Foundation

The Asian Rhino Specialist Group (AsRSG) is one of the Specialist Groups operating under the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The IUCN's SSC is a science-based network of some 7,500 volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, all working together towards achieving the vision of "A world that values and conserves present levels of biodiversity."

IMAGES: AARANYAK



AsRSG Chair, Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar at a tree planting ceremony

ULTRASONOGRAPHY

- the ultimate tool for Sumatran rhinos

Deep inside Way Kambas National Park, Indonesia, in a fenced sanctuary encompassing 100 hectares of natural rainforest, live five of the last Sumatran rhinoceros on earth. Just ten of these primitive hairy rhinos are held in captive facilities worldwide, making the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) holder of half the extant captive population.

Drs Robin W. Radcliffe, Dedi Candra, and Andriansyah
Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary

The goal of the SRS is to manage its captive rhinos to help augment wild populations that remain threatened. The animals are part of a global managed breeding programme for the species, with hopes of adding numbers through reproduction and new scientific knowledge that will enhance our understanding of these rare and secretive forest rhinos. Andalas, a new herd bull, arrived at the Sanctuary in early 2007 and brought with him a revival of hope for the sanctuary breeding programme as the centre's newest breeder. He is now meeting the females on a daily basis and has already been introduced to his future mates.

Making the decision on when to put the rhinos together at the right time can be a challenge, especially for a species like the Sumatran rhino that is largely solitary in

the wild and would not normally associate with another adult until the female is near oestrous and receptive. Drs. Dedi Candra and Andriansyah work together with the rhino keepers to ultrasound each female on a regular basis to learn about each female's reproductive cycle.

Ultrasound is now a practical piece of the rhino veterinarian's medical equipment arsenal and allows one to plan the male and female rhino mixings based on the size of the female's follicle (which contains the maturing egg). Work done at the Cincinnati Zoo has helped guide efforts to introduce rhinos at the most opportune time. Of course, if a female does become pregnant, the ultrasound will also help make the exciting diagnosis by allowing the doctors to directly visualize the foetus. Part of the effort is based on sound science - the ultrasound allows



IMAGES: SUMATRAN RHINO SANCTUARY

Top: SRS keeper Dede
Above: A typical meal for the rhinos at the SRS

one to carefully measure and record the daily changes in each rhino female's developing follicle. And another part is based on sound management - following behavioural clues to help guide the most opportune moment to open the gate that separates the male and female rhinoceros.

A great deal of hope rests on Andalas as a future breeding animal for the Way Kambas Rhino Sanctuary, and with the help of ultrasound we may one day soon see the beating heart of an unborn rhino.

Grants

Our thanks to Chester Zoo and the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation, who gave us a total of £14,019 towards the ongoing running costs of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary.

rhino range states, by arranging regular meetings and workshops as follows:

- Bi-ennial AsRSG workshops involving all Asian rhino range countries
- Annual AsRSG South East Asia workshops focusing on Javan and Sumatran rhinos (Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam)
- Annual AsRSG Southern Asia workshops focusing on Indian rhinos (Nepal and India)

Grant

Our very grateful thanks to the Taiwan Forestry Bureau, for its recent grant of \$5,000 towards the annual South East Asia workshop, to be held in February or March 2010 in Bogor, Indonesia.