

## Rare Rhino Pregnancy Gives Hope To Species

**Andalas-Ratu love story proves conservation efforts can work**

**Cincinnati/Los Angeles/Indonesia** -- Conservationists around the world are celebrating a pregnancy in one of the world's most endangered species, the Sumatran rhino. The pregnancy of female Ratu, born in Indonesia, and male Andalas, the first of only three Sumatran rhinos born in captivity in more than 112 years, is giving hope to international rhino biologists. The breeding occurred at Indonesia's Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas National Park after international efforts led to the pair's introduction. The calf is expected to be born in May 2011.

No ordinary pregnancy, Andalas and Ratu were brought together through international goodwill and cooperation in an effort to save this critically endangered species. Ratu wandered into a village just outside Sumatra's Way Kambas National Park in 2006; Andalas was born at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden in 2001 and grew up there before being transferred to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in 2007. With help from Dr. Robin Radcliffe of the International Rhino Foundation's (IRF) Rhino Conservation Medicine Program, the then-5 ½-year-old Andalas journeyed more than 10,000 miles on a 63-hour trip by plane, truck and ferry. Prior to his departure, he was vaccinated to protect him from diseases he would soon face in the rainforests of his native habitat.

Three years after Andalas' successful transition, he and Ratu mated. Mating followed months of gradual introduction by scent, sound, sight, and finally, physical proximity, ultimately resulting in the pregnancy.

Dr. Susie Ellis, executive director of the IRF said that a combination of sound science, international collaboration among government, non-profits, and zoos, as well as timing and personal chemistry, has led to this groundbreaking event. Their numbers have decreased by more than 50% over the last 15 years in the wild, so every individual counts. The captive population represents not only an 'insurance policy' for the wild population, but also a means to study the basic biology of the species, which must be understood in order to save them. The Sumatran rhino population is estimated at approximately 200 individuals in the wild and 10 currently in captivity worldwide. Ratu's pregnancy represents the hope for a future generation.

"We have been waiting a long time to share news of a

rhino pregnancy," said Dr. Dedi Candra, the sanctuary's animal collection coordinator. "With help from our partners, we have worked tirelessly to keep these animals healthy and breeding. Our dedicated keepers deserve a great deal of the credit."

"The Los Angeles Zoo is anxiously awaiting the birth of Ratu's calf in Indonesia," said John Lewis, Los Angeles zoo director. "We are long time supporters of this program. Although we miss Andalas at the zoo, we are so proud to have helped contribute towards the conservation of rhinos by sending him back to Indonesia."

In 1984, a group of reproductive biologists, zoologists and conservationists joined together to form the Sumatran Rhino Trust, an agreement bridging several countries and symbolizing hope for the conservation of an entire species. The Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary is a 250-acre complex built and funded by IRF. It is currently operated in partnership with the Indonesian Rhino Foundation under an agreement with the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry. The sanctuary houses five rhinos that are part of an intensively managed research and breeding program aimed at contributing to the conservation of the species in the wild. The rhinos reside in large, open areas where they can experience a natural rain forest habitat while receiving state-of-the-art veterinary care and nutrition.

Dr. Terri Roth, director of Cincinnati Zoo's Centre for Conservation and Research of Endangered Wildlife (CREW) and vice president for IRF's Asia programs, has used her extensive training in reproductive biology to produce three Sumatran rhinos beginning with Andalas in 2001, using hormonal assays and ultrasound techniques to determine the optimal time for introducing males and females.

"Sumatran rhinos are very solitary by nature and very aggressive towards one another except when a female is in oestrus," said Dr. Roth. "Through science we can determine when the female is ready to ovulate so that she is paired with a male at the right time and fighting is minimized while the likelihood of conception is optimized. It is wonderful to see the science developed at CREW help our Indonesian colleagues achieve success in the forest of Sumatra."

According to Dr. Roth, captive Sumatran rhinos fill many

roles. They represent a valuable resource for learning about the species' basic biology which can facilitate efforts to monitor and protect them in the wild. They serve as ambassadors for their species helping to educate both children and adults about rhinos and the rainforest, and they are becoming increasingly important as a back up to the wild population as the latter continues to decline.

"The Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary has been encouraged by Cincinnati Zoo's success," said Dr. Widodo Ramono, executive director of the Rhino Foundation of Indonesia. "Our staff has adapted the Cincinnati Zoo's methodology to the local environment at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, particularly ultrasonographic techniques, to achieve this result."

"While captive breeding is not a substitute for protecting the species in the wild, it is a critical part of an integrated strategy for the Sumatran rhino's recovery," said Dr. Ellis. "The IRF, through its local partner, the Indonesian Rhino Foundation, also operates anti-poaching units in three Indonesian national parks. Thanks to those programs, there has been no rhino poaching in the last five years, and poaching of other large vertebrates which share rhino habitat has decreased significantly."

Development of a viable and holistic program that involves captive breeding will provide insurance against the difficulties and uncertainties of protecting the Sumatran rhino in the wild. Solid success with this species may provide a model for development of a similar program for the critically endangered Javan rhino, whose population is more stable but numbers no more than 50 individuals in the wild, with no insurance population in captivity. Indonesia harbours two critically endangered rhino species, but with far less attention than African rhinos.



Above: Andalas. Photo: Mongabay.com

## Sumatran Rhino Miscarriage Deals Rescue Efforts a Setback

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/sumatran-rhino-miscarriage-deals-rescue-efforts-a-setback/367282>

The loss of the first pregnancy of Ratu, a young female Sumatran rhinoceros at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas National Park, is a blow to efforts to pull the species from the verge of extinction.

"This is not unusual for a rhino's first pregnancy," Susie Ellis, the executive director of the International Rhino Foundation, said in a statement released late on Wednesday.

"While we are saddened by this loss, the fact that we achieved a pregnancy confirms that our work with the Sumatran rhino breeding program is progressing. Ratu and [male rhino] Andalas are healthy and have produced one pregnancy, so we are optimistic that success will soon be achieved," she added.

"Our staff is disappointed, but the fact that we did achieve a pregnancy reconfirms our commitment to helping Ratu and Andalas succeed," said Dedi Candra, the sanctuary's animal collection coordinator.

## Adopt-a-Rhino Fundraiser

Help us save the Sumatran rhino by adopting one today – and it's tax deductible!

All funds raised through the ARP's adopt-a-rhino program will be used to support the SRS in Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra.

With each adoption you will receive an attractive adoption certificate including information on your rhino and the program.

You can also choose to receive quarterly updates on your rhino as well as an A4 sized photograph

(extra costs apply for photos and updates).

More information on the rhinos and the program is on our website [www.asianrhinos.org.au](http://www.asianrhinos.org.au).

