

IMAGES: DEDICANDRA-SUMATRAN RHINO SANCTUARY



We're very sad to report that, since the writing of this article, Ratu has lost her pregnancy. The fact that a pregnancy was achieved after only the third mating is still a huge victory. Once Ratu is ready, the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary staff will resume efforts to achieve another pregnancy.

Andalas-Ratu love story proves conservation efforts can work

Just days after Valentine's Day, conservationists across 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, by male Andalas, the first of only three Sumatran rhinos born in captivity in over 112 years, is giving hope to international rhino biologists. The calf is expected to be born in May 2011.

Susie Ellis
Executive Director
International Rhino Foundation

This is no ordinary pregnancy. In 1984, a group of reproductive biologists, zoologists and conservationists joined together to form the Sumatran Rhino Trust, an agreement bridging several countries and symbolising hope for the conservation of an entire species. Following this, a combination of sound science, international collaboration among government, NGOs and zoos, as well as timing and personal chemistry, has led to this ground breaking event. Sumatran rhino numbers have decreased by more than 50% over the last 15 years in the wild. Every individual counts, and 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 we must understand in order to save them.

The Sumatran rhino population is estimated at approximately 200 individuals in the wild and 10 currently in captivity worldwide. 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. 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 Sumatran Rhino 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."

Dr Terri Roth, director of Cincinnati Zoo's Center for Conservation and Research of Endangered Wildlife (CREW) and vice president for International Rhino Foundation's (IRF) Asia programmes, has used her extensive training in reproductive biology to produce three Sumatran rhinos beginning with Andalas in 2001, utilising 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 minimised while the likelihood of conception is optimised. It is wonderful to see the science developed at CREW help our Indonesian colleagues achieve success in the forest of Sumatra."



Go Wild for Wildlife - BBC Wildlife Fund 2010

We're delighted to announce that the BBC Wildlife Fund's next charity appeal. The campaign will launch towards the end of April and the live broadcast appeal programme, *Wild Night In*, will be shown on BBC2 on Sunday 20 June, hosted by Chris Packham and Kate Humble with lots of special guests.

Tamsyn Smith
Project Coordinator
BBC Wildlife Fund

We're proud to be supporting Save the Rhino, in particular via our grant which helps the work of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary where Ratu and Andalas reside.

Our 2010 WILD campaign hopes to inspire community fundraising and involvement through 'Springwatch Wild Days Out' - a revival of the popular Springwatch Festivals. We will also be launching a brand new website, a fundraising pack and details about our 2010 grant programme and application process.

To find out more about the grants we provide to wildlife charities working in the UK and overseas, please take a look at our website www.bbc.co.uk/bbcwildlifefund. If you would like to support the campaign, email us at bbcwildlifefund@bbc.co.uk so we can add your name to our mailing list and send you a fundraising pack in April.