

One of the challenges of the Specialist Group is to bring together the various institutions and agencies involved in field conservation efforts and guide these efforts towards the common goal of ensuring the survival of the elephant across Asia's biologically rich forests.

Raman Sukumar, Chair

Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India—rsuku@ces.iisc.ernet.in

The African Rhino Specialist Group

The new IUCN African Rhino Action Plan was distributed early in the year and can now be downloaded from the AfRSG's web page. The Plan was used as the primary background document at the first SADC (Southern African Development Community) rhino range states meeting under the SADC regional program for rhino conservation. The AfRSG has been playing an active technical role as one of the five consortium members in this three-year program and a number of projects and initiatives are now underway.

The AfRSG held its fifth meeting at Lake Manyara, Tanzania. The latest continental rhino statistics compiled by the AfRSG at the meeting show a continued increase in black and white rhino numbers up to 2,700 and over 10,300, respectively. However, numbers of two of the six subspecies, the northern white (28) and the western black rhino (10 or less) remain at critical levels. A workshop reviewed various alternative emergency strategies to try to save the western black rhino from extinction. These deliberations formed much of the basis for a subsequent high-level, joint AfRSG, IUCN, IUCN France, and WWF mission to Cameroon, which discussed the development and implementation of an emergency conservation plan with the Cameroon Authorities.

AfRSG members also participated in a technical assistance mission to Tanzanian rhino areas, a workshop to review the Zimbabwe national black rhino conservation strategy, and a workshop to develop a revised Kenyan national plan. A number of members continue to be active on national rhino management committees. The AfRSG also organized and hosted a study tour of Kenyan rhino conservationists who visited South Africa to examine a range of issues, including rhino databases, field ID monitoring programs, law enforcement, and habitat and carrying capacity assessment techniques.

Significant progress was made by the AfRSG in its horn fingerprinting for security project, which seeks to determine the species and source of

rhino horns through analyses of their chemistry. This project has strong support from conservation agency law enforcement staff, specialized wildlife police units, and wildlife crime investigators.

The AfRSG also completed a major revision of "Sandwith's" rhino ID training course for field rangers with primary funding from the US Fish and Wildlife. A total of 25 sets of manuals have been distributed and the response from the field to date has been positive, with a big demand for more sets. A further edition of the course will be produced in the near future and, under the SADC rhino program, a training course using the set was held in March 2001.

The AfRSG also continues to assist donor agencies to spend their money wisely and effectively by reviewing and prioritizing project proposals submitted for funding.

Finally, the AfRSG wishes to thank and acknowledge WWF for their generous support of many of its activities. Without WWF's support much of the progress reported above would not have happened.

*Richard Emslie, African Rhino Specialist Group—
remslie@kznnccs.org.za*

The Caribbean Fishes Specialist Group

The newly established Caribbean Fishes Specialist Group is focusing its first campaign on the inland fishes of the oceanic islands stretching from Bermuda through the Antilles to the San Andrés Archipelago of Colombia. The streams, lakes, caves and other inland habitats of the Caribbean islands have a surprisingly rich fish fauna (about 175 species including 65 narrow endemics), but these fishes have generally been neglected in conservation efforts.

Several members of the Specialist Group are preparing a checklist of inland fishes of these islands that will delineate the distributions of endemic, native, and invasive species. The project is using NEODAT (<http://neodat.org>) as the basic mechanism for building electronic resources that will be accessible across the Caribbean for research on fishes. A website (<http://caribbeanfish.org/cfwl.html>) has been developed that provides links to databases in 21 institutions that maintain detailed records about Caribbean fishes. Bibliographic and policy databases are also being developed.

Although a general analysis of threats to the region's inland fishes has never been carried out, it is likely that invasive species constitute the leading immediate threat because they have replaced endemic species in many areas. The Specialist Group is documenting invasive species

