

ZOOM

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Sumatra here I come

Story & pictures by Martin Ellis

After 12 years amongst the lush woodland paddocks of Port Lympne, the small gentle inquisitive character we all knew as Torgamba was finally going back to the jungle.

When his companion died in November 1994, a great effort was made to find Torgamba another mate, but the discovery of a patch of pristine forest with government protection, inspired a dream to return Torgamba back to a sanctuary deep within the forest of the Way Kambas National Park.

The long journey to Indonesia began with the loading at Port Lympne into a transport crate and on to a lorry bound for Manchester. At the airport a Hercules cargo plane awaited us, the roar and hammer of the four propeller engines produced quite the loudest noise I have ever heard. The next 48 hours were to be gruelling and uncomfortable for all concerned.

On landing in Holland, we transferred to the hold of a huge 747 passenger plane, much more comfortable and surprisingly quiet. After 15 hours we landed in Jakarta on the island of Java, to an enthusiastic reception party with "Welcome Torgamba" banners, TV cameras and press.

From Java, we travelled by ferry boat past the great volcano, Krakatau and on to the massive island of Sumatra.

It was night time as we entered the forest, the warm heavily scented air and jungle sounds awakened Torgamba's senses and his eyes sparkled with anticipation. He was released into a holding pen where he would remain for a week getting used to his new diet of forest browse and acclimatising to the very hot tropical weather.



Soon he was ready to explore his 25 acre tropical forest enclosure, and was quickly pushing his way through the thick vines and foliage and feeding on the juicy leaves. As well as meeting two female Sumatran rhinos, Bina and Dusun, Torgamba shares the forest with many wild animals, such as binturong, siamang, Malayan tapir, elephants, tigers and deer.

Torgamba is very happy in his new home and hopefully he will father many Sumatran rhino calves in the future.



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