

Mourning the Loss of Sumatran Rhino Torgamba

Torgamba, an elderly male Sumatran rhino (estimated to be 32 years old), died Saturday at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Indonesia, following a long illness which appeared to be associated with chronic renal disease.

“The SRS staff is deeply saddened,” said Widodo Ramono, Executive Director of local NGO Yayasan Badak Indonesia, which operates the facility. “It’s difficult to put into words and describe the attachment that has developed over the past years. This is a terrible loss, especially for the rhino keepers and veterinary medical staff who cared for Torgamba during his time with us.”

Torgamba was one of the first wild-born Sumatran rhinos to become part of an international Sumatran rhino breeding effort.

In November 1985, Torgamba was rescued by an organization working to capture displaced rhinos using sophisticated pitfall traps constructed so as to avoid any possible injuries to the animals.

Torgamba was the first displaced rhino to become part of a joint program between the Indonesian government and international zoos and non-profits to study and breed Sumatran rhinos in captivity, with the ultimate aim of reinforcing populations in the wild.

Soon after his rescue, Torgamba was moved to Port Lympne Wild Animal Park near Kent, England, where he lived for 11 years. Torgamba was much loved by staff and visitors of the zoo, and was the subject of a book, *The Rhinoceros*, by zoo owner John Aspinall. Torgamba was paired with two different female Sumatran rhinos in England, but unfortunately both suffered health problems and Torgamba never successfully reproduced.

In early 1998, Torgamba was transferred back to Indonesia, where the newly-opened Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) had been constructed in Way Kambas National Park, to manage an intensive research and breeding program aimed at increasing the Sumatran rhino population.

At the Sanctuary, constructed by the International Rhino Foundation in partnership with the Indonesian government, the rhinos reside in large, open forest areas where they can experience a natural habitat



while still receiving state-of-the-art veterinary care and good nutrition.

Like Sumatran rhinos in the wild, Torgamba was able to spend most of the day in his 25-acre enclosure feeding on the twigs and leaves of trees and shrubs growing in the forest understory. Although he bred numerous times with two female rhinos at the SRS, Bina and Ratu, neither became pregnant.

Despite several years of treatment for his chronic illness, and the best efforts of the Sanctuary’s keepers and veterinary staff in consultation with international rhino experts, Torgamba passed away at approximately 7:30 EST Saturday 23 April 2011. SRS vets and staff worked around the clock for several months to make Torgamba’s last month’s comfortable.

The SRS is still home to one captive born male (Andalas) and three female rhinos. Female rhino Ratu conceived twice in 2010 after mating with Andalas, but later lost the pregnancies. There are high hopes for another pregnancy soon.

We are extremely grateful to all friends and donors who have helped support Torgamba and the SRS over the years, and especially to his “adoptive parents” who have provided funds for Torgamba’s care.