



Tam and Dr Zainal in the Tabin rhino facilities.

Update on Rhinos in Sabah and the Work of Borneo Rhino Alliance

Our Winter 2010 issue provided an update on the Sumatran rhinoceros in Sabah, Malaysia and the work of Borneo Rhino Alliance (BORA; www.borneorhinoalliance.org), formerly SOS Rhino Borneo, a non-governmental organization (NGO) established as a not-for-profit company, which continues to work with Sabah Wildlife Department and WWF in Sabah.

The status of the Sumatran rhino in Borneo has for many years been even more dire than that of the species in Sumatra, with just a few scattered individuals remaining in a few localities, and infrequent breeding. There is now great concern that most remaining individuals are old or infertile.

Apart from protecting wild rhinos, the emphasis in Sabah is on forming a fenced, managed facility in Tabin Wildlife Reserve, similar to that at Way Kambas, Sumatra, Indonesia, to which rhinos are to be brought and treated individually to maximize the chances that every remaining individual can contribute towards saving the species.

Tam, about 18 years old, is being cared for, currently with the main aim of obtaining and freezing sperm. A specific wild female rhino has been targeted since early 2010 for capture, to provide a mate for Tam, but the extensive forest on steep hilly terrain which forms her home range has been a major challenge to fulfilling that aim.

In the mean time, an old, post-reproductive female named Gelogob, caught as a mature adult in 1994, which had been on public display at Lok Kawi Wildlife Park near the capital of Sabah, was moved to Tabin in September 2010.

In addition to rhino reproduction specialists and anaesthetists from the Leibnitz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife (IZW) Research, Berlin, University of Austria, and Malaysia, Australian embryo specialists Lisa McLellan (Melbourne) and Jennifer Kelly (Adelaide) were on standby at Tabin in January 2011 in case of any prospect for production of embryos. But after hormone treatments it was a disappointment to find no sign of ovulation. A further attempt to stimulate Gelogob to contribute to her species survival will be made during 2011, with the advice and technical support of the IZW specialists.

The emphasis at the interim rhino facilities Tabin is on providing excellent food, care and health monitoring, in the belief that such attention is an essential basis for the aim of production of gametes (ova and sperm) and embryos. Apart from the government of Sabah, the biggest financial supporters of development of Borneo Rhino Sanctuary programme are Sime Darby Foundation (www.yayasansimedarby.com) and WWF-Germany.



Gelugob prepares to be moved to Tabin.



Sabah Wildlife Department senior ranger Herman Stawin with BORA staff.