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The Rhino Conservation Newsletter



GCAP - GASP



Regional Captive
Propagation Programs

1995?

Volume 3, Issue 1

THE HAIRY RHINO WITHIN A HAIR'S BREADTH OF EXTINCTION

The Sumatran, a.k.a. hairy, rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) is probably the most endangered of all rhinoceros species. Fewer than 500 survive in the wild. Numbers have declined 50% over the last decade due to poachers and there is no indication that the situation is stabilizing. Although the Javan rhino is fewer in number (K), their main population in Java (~ 50-60) has been rather stable for the last ten years. The African black rhino has declined over 85% during the last decade but numbers of this species are still ~ 2,300 and have been stable at this level for the last two years. Moreover, there is a self-sustaining albeit not vigorously growing captive population. The IRF and the global captive conservation community are involved in both *in situ* and *ex situ* efforts for this species.

In Situ Efforts

For the last two years, the IUCN SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group (AsRSG) has been facilitating development of a \$ 2 million grant from the Global Environment Fund (G.E.F.) to initiate more vigorous programs for *in situ* protection of Sumatran rhino in Indonesian and Malaysia, the last two countries where appreciable populations of this species survive. The IRF has provided the Program Office for the AsRSG and therefore has also been centrally involved in facilitating development of this project. It is expected that this project will be initiated in late March 1995 and continue for three years.

The \$ 2 million is no where near enough money to support this program for even three years but it can catalyze more support.

The IRF will be centrally involved in attempting to secure other sources of support to supplement the GEF funds and sustain the program beyond the next three years. One effort, modest in amount of money but very significant in terms of impact, is supplemental support to enable a Rhino Conservation Coordinator to be available for the GEF Project in Malaysia. This support is being provided currently by a partnership of IRF and the St Louis Zoo with other partners expected to participate soon.

Ex Situ Efforts

Ex situ captive propagation had been considered an important component in the strategy for Sumatran rhino. However, since the inception of the *ex situ* programs in 1984, 39 rhino have been

captured and 19 of these have died, a mortality of almost 50%. The most recent deaths have been the tragic losses of both of the Sumatran rhino at the San Diego Zoo in February 1995. Exacerbating the high mortality has been the lack of any reproduction in captivity. One female was born at the Malacca Zoo in 1987 but to a female that was captured pregnant although most of the gestation transpired in captivity. Another female had died at Port Lympne in the United Kingdom in November of 1994. Only 20 (7/13) Sumatran rhino survive in captivity at nine facilities in four countries.

The reasons for the high mortality and lack of reproduction are not known. However, there is significant and growing opinion that success of intensive (i.e. captive) management and managed breeding of Sumatran rhinos may require the rhino to be maintained in larger enclosures. Some Sumatran rhino ecologists in particular advocate that females and males be totally separated except when females are in estrus, a social system believed to prevail in the wild.

As a consequence of these misfortunes there have been recommendations for development of managed breeding centers in native habitat. Two major initiatives are under development to create such Sumatran rhino centers.

(1) The Department of Wildlife and National Parks in Malaysia has actually been moving in this direction for some time. They have established a breeding center at the edge of Sungai Dusun Wildlife Sanctuary. The diet of rhino there is largely natural browse collected from the adjacent forest. However, the enclosures are still relatively small (about 2 acres each); females cannot be widely separated from males; and the rhino have no opportunity to select browse from the forest themselves. This situation is being improved by enlarging the existing enclosures to about 25 acres and extending them into the forest.

(2) As recommended by the Indonesian Rhino Conservation Strategy and the 1993 Indonesian Sumatran Rhino Population and Habitat Viability Analysis, efforts are in progress to establish a managed breeding center (being referred to as a Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary or SRS) in native habitat in Way Kambas National Park

FROM THE EDITORS

If you've received this latest issue of *Around the Horn* in the mail, chances are you received an earlier version, perhaps in another life or at least at another address. It has indeed been some time since we last published but as you can tell, ATH has once again been resurrected. Hopefully, we have finally acquired both the involvement of individuals and the financial resources necessary to reliably communicate rhino information to the people and institutions concerned about rhinos — and do so in a timely manner.

It is our intent that ATH serve as a communications vehicle for a number of organizations involved in the conservation and management of rhino species. Consequently, the ATH will be the "official" publication of the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), the American Zoo and Aquarium Association Rhino Taxon Advisory Group (Rhino TAG), and the Global Captive Action Plan/Global Animal Survival Program for Rhinos (GCAP/GASP).

The mission of the IRF is to contribute to rhino conservation by providing technical, administrative, and financial services and support for programs which emphasize intensive management and scientific research both *in-situ* and *ex-situ* as equally important components of rhino conservation. With major *in-situ* projects underway involving southern black, northern white, and Sumatran rhinos, the IRF is emphasizing those species/subspecies which are under the most severe threat while continuing to monitor and propose more modest efforts for Indian rhino in India and Nepal, and southern white and black rhinos in South Africa.

The AZA Rhino TAG advises the Species Survival Plan rhino programs in North America, providing master plan and data management assistance. The TAG also facilitates the involvement by participating institutions in *in-situ* projects through partnerships with the IRF or institutions in other regional programs. Additionally, it is extremely important that information and recommendations resulting from GCAP/GASP meetings be distributed to all rhino institutions worldwide in order to insure that everyone has access to the global data required to make informed decisions within their regions and particularly their institutions.

Finally, we hope to facilitate information between institutions and the people on the front line - those who are fighting the battle in the field. Over the past few years a number of institutions have expanded their conservation programs to include support for field conservation. Only through open communication can we build on these essential efforts.

-- Bob Reece

-- Tom Foose

U.S. RHINO AND TIGER ACT

In October 1994, the U.S. Congress passed and the President signed a Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act. The main purpose of the Act is to provide support for rhino and tiger conservation. The language of the Act establishes a fund and states that up to US \$ 10,000,000 per year for the next five fiscal years (1996-2000) will be appropriated for projects enhancing conservation of these two species. The Act will be administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in a manner similar to the previous African Elephant Conservation Act.

This Act is most commendable in intent and can represent a real difference in rhinoceros and tiger conservation. However, the budget submitted to Congress by the President is proposing an appropriation of \$ 850,000 for fiscal year 1996, less than 10% of the potential. Hopefully, additional funds may be restored to the fund as the appropriation for it moves through the Congressional approval process.

For further information on the Act, its status, and application for funds, contact:

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-- Tom Foose

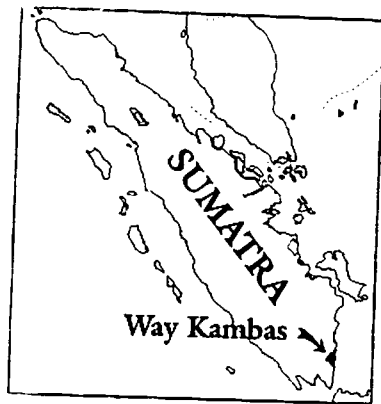


AROUND THE HORN SUBMISSIONS

It is intended that *Around the Horn* be published twice a year in March and in September. The deadlines for these issues will be 1 February for the March issue and 1 August for the September issue.

Articles are invited from persons involved in rhino conservation, particularly from the global captive conservation community or others involved in intensive management of rhinos.

There will be an attempt in future issues to have regular reports from the various regional rhino programs in the world zoo community.



Map of Way Kambas

RHINOCEROS GLOBAL CAPTIVE ACTION PLAN (GCAP) & GLOBAL ANIMAL SURVIVAL PLANS (GASPs)

Attempts to develop more strategic and global programs for rhino conservation by the world zoo community commenced with a Global Captive Action Plan (GCAP) Workshop conducted at London Zoo in May 1992. A draft Plan was produced by mid-summer and circulated to all workshop participants as well as other leaders of rhino programs in various regions of the zoo world and to other significant members of the global conservation community. Based on feedback, a first edition of the Global Captive Action Plan was published in September 1992. As recommended by the GCAP, Global Animal Survival Plans (GASPs) were initiated for four of the five species of rhino that are maintained in captivity.

Iterative and interactive development of the GCAP and GASPs has continued since 1992 by the Regional Captive Propagation Programs and Taxon Advisory Groups.

In April, 1993 the International Rhino Foundation (IRF) established its Program Office and employed Dr. Tom Foose as its Program Officer. Tom has been serving as the Facilitator/Coordinator of the Rhino GCAP/GASP since its inception at the 1992 London Zoo Workshop. The IRF has agreed to support Tom to perform these functions as long as the GCAP/GASP Management Committee so desires.

A major meeting of the GCAP/GASP Management Committee was conducted at the CBSG Annual Meeting in Antwerp in September 1993 and a report was published in CBSG News Vol 4, No. 3 (December 1993). Although both *ex situ* and *in situ* programs have been considered as part of the GCAP/GASP from its inception, increased emphasis was placed on *in situ* programs, both protection in the wild as well as more intensive management in natural habitats.

An update on the GCAP/GASPs was prepared for the 1994 CBSG meeting in Sao Paulo in September 1994. Rather few members of the Rhino GCAP/GASP Management Committee were able to attend this meeting so not much further development of the GCAP/GASPs occurred. (The strongest recommendation from this meeting was for greater consolidation of the Sumatran rhino in captivity with the objective of facilitating reproduction.)

Hence, the remainder of this report represents, for the most part, the status of the GCAP/GASPs of September 1994. A few updates in the data in the tables have been incorporated.

The current status of the GCAP/GASP is summarized in three tables.

(1) Rhinoceros Populations: Protected *In Situ* (IPZ) and Under Intensive Management (IMP) on Both Global and Regional Levels at Current and Target Numbers

in Sumatra. At least two enclosures of 25 acres each will be provided for each rhino. The enclosures will be configured to permit separation of the sexes except when females are in estrus. The initial breeding stock will be derived from rhino currently in captivity in Indonesia, probably supplemented by the repatriation of the male surviving at Port Lympne in the United Kingdom. This project is being developed as a joint venture by the Indonesian Department of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation (PHPA), the Indonesian Friends of Rhino Foundation (Yayasan Mitra Rhino), and the International Rhino Foundation (IRF) with a growing number of other partners from the captive conservation community. Moreover, the SRS will comprise two major programs: the biological for the rhino but also a conservation tourist program that is envisioned as capable of generating revenue to support not only the SRS but also to contribute to rhino conservation elsewhere in Indonesia.

Human hunters probably caused the extinction of the woolly rhino (*Coelodonta antiquitatis*) in the late Pleistocene. The Sumatran or hairy rhino is a close relative of the woolly. Humans are within a hair's breadth of doing it again.

-- Tom Foose



Sumatran Rhino in captivity in Indonesia