

CAPTIVE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY ASSISTS NORTHERN WHITE RHINO

Garamba National Park in Zaire contains the last verified population of northern white rhino. At last count, 28 (14,14) rhino are verified to survive in the park, with three more possible. Over a time scale of the last decade, this number represents an increase of 100% from the 16 that survived when the current intensive protection and management program was initiated by IUCN, WWF, and Frankfurt Zoological Society in 1984. However, during the last year, numbers have fluctuated, with a high of 32 being attained in February of 1994. Two deaths are known to have occurred and three rhinos have been lost to surveillance. Neither of the two deaths were losses to poachers, but poaching risks remains high. Poaching of elephants in the Park has been intense and is intensifying.

Another nine northern white rhino (4.5) are maintained in two zoological institutions: Dvur Kralove in the Czech republic and San Diego Wild Animal Park in the United States. The rhino in captivity have not been reproducing well. Intensive efforts are in progress at San Diego Wild Animal Park to evaluate and manipulate their 2.2 rhino to induce breeding.

Considering the numbers (<40), distribution (all the wild ones in a single site), and condition (captive not breeding; wild under severe poacher threat), the northern white rhino is the most endangered of all rhino taxa. (As mentioned elsewhere, the Sumatran is probably the most endangered full species.)

To help with this crisis, over the last two years, 16 institutions/organizations of the global captive conservation community in six countries on three continents have contributed to the conservation program for northern white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) in Garamba National Park, Zaire.

The project has been facilitated by the International Rhino Foundation (IRF) and conducted under auspices of the Rhino Global Captive Action Plan (GCAP) and White Rhino Global Animal Survival Plan (GASP).

There have been three major components to the support of this program thus far.

(1) **Vehicle:** The first is provision of a desperately needed 4-wheel drive vehicle to improve protection, management, and research activities in the Park. Institutions/organizations contributing to this project are:

Australia	Werribee Zoological Park
Belgium	Antwerp Zoological Society
Canada	Calgary Zoo
	Toronto Zoo
Netherlands	Burger's Zoo and Safari, Arnhem
	Safari Park Beekse Bergen
	Noorder Dierenpark, Emmen
United States:	Chicago (Brookfield) Zoological Park
	Columbus Zoological Gardens
	Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
	Jacksonville Zoological Gardens
	St Louis Zoological Park
	Virginia Zoological Society
	White Oak Conservation Center
	The Wilds
United Kingdom	Marwell Zoological Park

The Columbus Zoo has provided significant leadership for this project by donating an initial matching grant of half the funds needed.

An additional partnership for this project has been developed with Care for the Wild, an NGO in the U.K. which has provided about 20% of the funds for this project. The Marwell Zoological Society facilitated the contact between Care for the Wild and the IRF for this partnership.

(2) **Guard Support:** Political and financial complications in Zaire have prevented the guards from being paid at a liveable level or indeed in any amount for the last two years. In 1993, the Columbus Zoo initiated this aspect of the program by contributing \$ 10,000 through the IRF to the Garamba Project. In 1995, the Columbus Zoo has donated another \$ 25,000 which is being matched by funds from other IRF members so that a total of \$50,000 will be provided for support of guards in Garamba this year.

(3) **Strategic Planning:** An important part of the ongoing program will be continued attempts to develop an improved strategy for conservation of the northern white rhino including the possibility of establishing a second free-ranging population. Toward this end, two strategy sessions were conducted earlier this year; one at IUCN SSC Headquarters in Switzerland and the other in Mombasa, Kenya in conjunction with the meeting of the IUCN/SSC African Rhino Specialist Group. Preliminary population and habitat viability analyses using VORTEX were conducted at the Mombasa meeting. A more extensive meeting involving all major stakeholders in conservation of this subspecies is being proposed for mid to late 1995. The IRF Program Officer has participated in both strategy sessions that have already occurred and IRF will be helping to facilitate the full workshop later in the year.

Additional funds for protection of Garamba are urgently needed. The IRF invites and encourages other institutions/organizations to consider contributions to this program.

-- Tom Foose



Vehicle donated through Rhino GCAP/GASP to Garamba Program.