

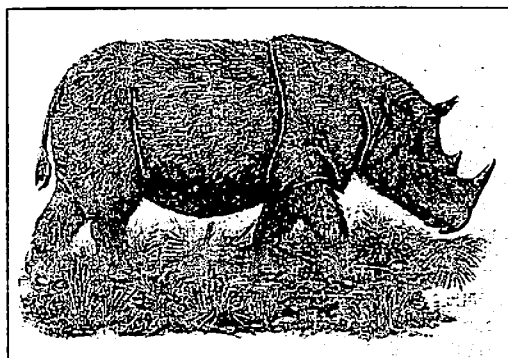
**Past and Present Ranges of the Greater One-Horned and Javan Rhinos**

Source: International Wildlife Trade: Whose Business Is It?, Sarah Fitzgerald, World Wildlife Fund

mal is difficult to protect. Rhinos recently captured on Sumatra for a captive breeding programme had fresh snare wounds on their legs, evidence of continued poaching. But the rhino's long-term nemesis is severe habitat loss from Indonesia's transmigration programme.

"The Javan and Sumatran rhinos are probably the most endangered species in terms of long-term survival," says Jorgen Thomsen, Director of the international office of the Trade Records Analysis of Fauna and Flora in Commerce (TRAFFIC). "Though all the rhinos are endangered, with all the attention paid to the black rhino, the two little rhinos have almost been forgotten."

**Vital Statistics: The Sumatran Rhinoceros**



©WWF, Helmut Diller

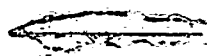
**Aka:** Asian two-horned rhinoceros, woolly rhinoceros

**Threat category:** endangered

**Total population:** 500-900

**Distribution:** primarily Sumatra, Indonesia and Malay Peninsula. Small pockets in Borneo, Burma, and Thailand

**Average height and weight:** 1.36 metres at shoulder, 900 kilos



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# Precious Cargo: The State of the Rhino Horn Trade

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*Between 1970 and 1987, more than 100 tonnes of rhino horn were bought and sold in international markets. That is equivalent to at least 40,000 dead rhinos. In 1987, the Contracting Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) agreed that the ban on international trade in rhino horn and rhino products should be extended to domestic trade. However, in China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand the import, export, and domestic sale of rhino horn and rhino products remains a lucrative industry.*

The figures speak for themselves: According to the *China Daily* newspaper, in 1987 the Chinese government earned a record \$700 million from the export of medicines and medicinal wines; rhino horn being an ingredient in some of them. In Thailand, African horn costs \$10,286 a kilo retail while in Taiwan the retail price for Asian horn is as high as \$50,000 a kilo.

Since almost all rhino horn trade is illegal, it is difficult to track precise amounts and origins, but most commercial rhino horn ends up in the Far East for use in traditional medicines.

#### What Is CITES?

One of the most important conservation agreements, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora came into force in 1975. Today 110 countries are Contracting Parties to the Convention, which prohibits international commercial trade in endangered species (listed in Appendix I) and regulates trade in less-threatened species (listed in Appendix II) through a permit system.

Each CITES Party is required to designate one or more governmental departments as a Management Authority to issue permits and compile annual trade reports. A designated Scientific Authority advises permit approvals. The CITES Secretariat, located in Lausanne, Switzerland, oversees Convention administration.

All five rhino species are listed in Appendix I.

As some species of rhinos become more scarce, the market price and demand for rhino products go up. The tip cut of Asian and African rhino horn is widely regarded as "the best part." However, on the international market, Asian horn brings in 10 times the price of African horn. The reason? Asians say that because greater one-horned, Sumatran, and Javan horns are smaller, the elements that lower fever and cure nose bleeds are more concentrated.

Stopping the domestic sale of rhino horn medicines is just as important as ending the import and export of rhino horn. Until consumers are convinced that there are more effective substitutes for rhino horn, the demand for it will continue. As long as there is a demand, traders will smuggle in horn, claiming it is old stock. A first step towards controlling the sale of horn is to have an accurate register of existing stockpiles in the four target countries. So far Taiwan and China have taken this measure.

Former markets such as Hong Kong have banned all trade—internal and external. Hong Kong has even banned the sale of medicines claiming to contain rhino horn. Unfortunately, the governments of China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Thailand are not doing enough.

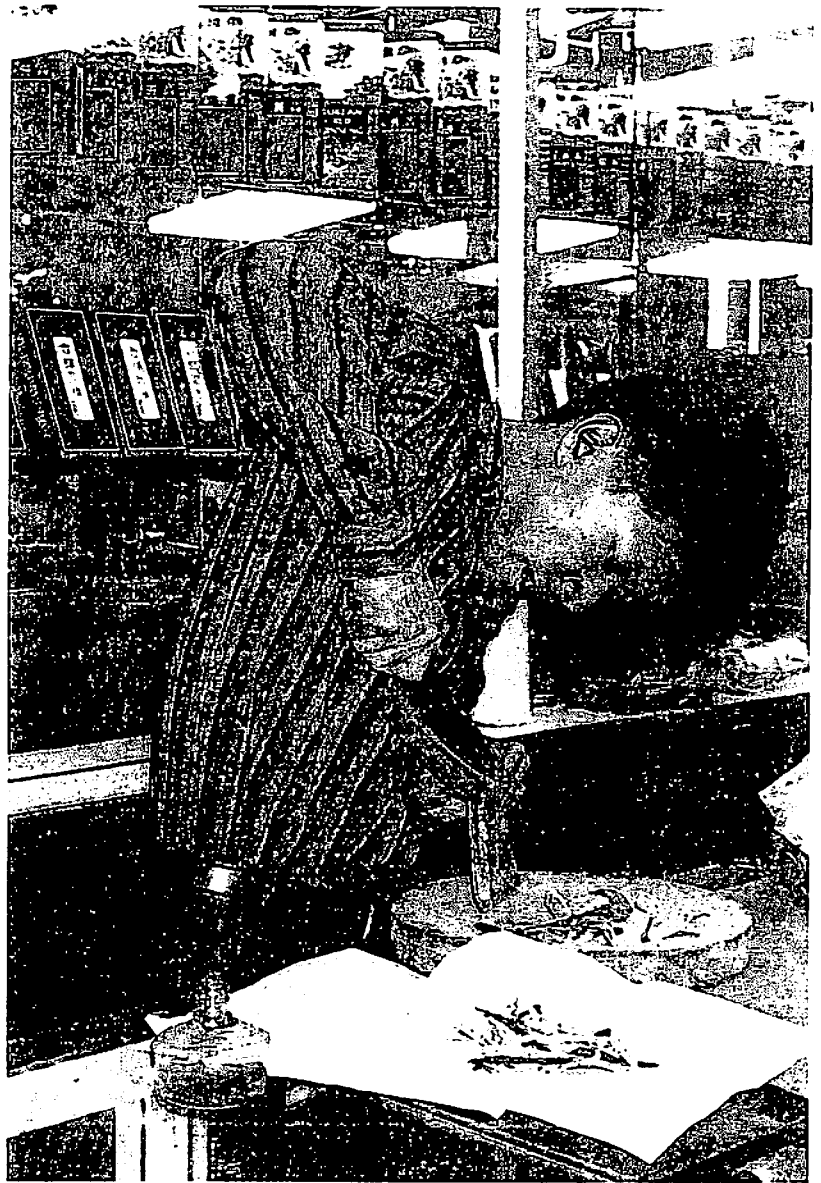
Part of the explanation is that governments are simply not willing to allocate resources to the issue. "Bureaucracies are notorious for not wanting to increase their workloads," says Tom Milliken, director of TRAFFIC Japan, "and that's just what the regulation and monitoring of rhino horn will do. They just don't want to be bothered."

## China: Old Traditions Die Hard

The situation in China, the world's largest manufacturer of rhino horn medicines, is critical. The country's own rhinos were already rare by the eighth century and China has been importing the precious horn ever since. In 1989, under international pressure, Chinese authorities registered rhino horn stocks. They found more than 10 tonnes of rhino horn—the largest known stock in the world.

China has been making medicines with rhino horn for 2,000 years and is now the only country in the world still doing so on a large-scale basis. Two of the most common Chinese medicines available in Southeast Asia are the tranquilizers Niu Huang Ching Hsin Wan, a product of Beijing's famous Tong Ren Tang Pharmaceutical Company; and Laryngitis Pills, made by the Chengdu Traditional Chinese Pharmaceutical Factory in Chengdu to relieve high fever. China has not complied with the 1987 CITES agreement to ban internal trade of rhino products on the grounds that the horns being used were acquired before it joined CITES in 1981. However, China continued to import rhino horn from North Yemen, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Singapore, and Thailand after 1981.

Another source of rhino horn is antique carvings, which are being ground into pow-



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der for medicines. "Trading corporations and medicine factories have been acquiring them since the 1949 revolution," says Esmond Bradley Martin, who has been studying the rhino horn trade for WWF since 1979. "No one can guess how many Ming and Ch'ing carvings have been ground down to powder."

China has made efforts to control the rhino horn medicine trade, but with limited results. In 1988, the government ruled that all

**Prized hide: A pharmacist cuts a piece of rhino skin in a traditional Chinese medicine shop in Southeast Asia.**

exports of rhino horn medicine require a permit from the Chinese CITES Management Authority. Even though no permits have been issued, export continues through Chinese living overseas who purchase the medicines and take them out of the country. Most local Chinese do not purchase the medicines—they are too expensive.

CITES Management Authority statistics show that about 650 kilos of rhino horn are used in China every year. With the current stockpile, China has enough horn to last the next 15 years.

Even though substitutes are available, Chinese companies still use rhino horn to a great extent. According to Martin, Tong Ren

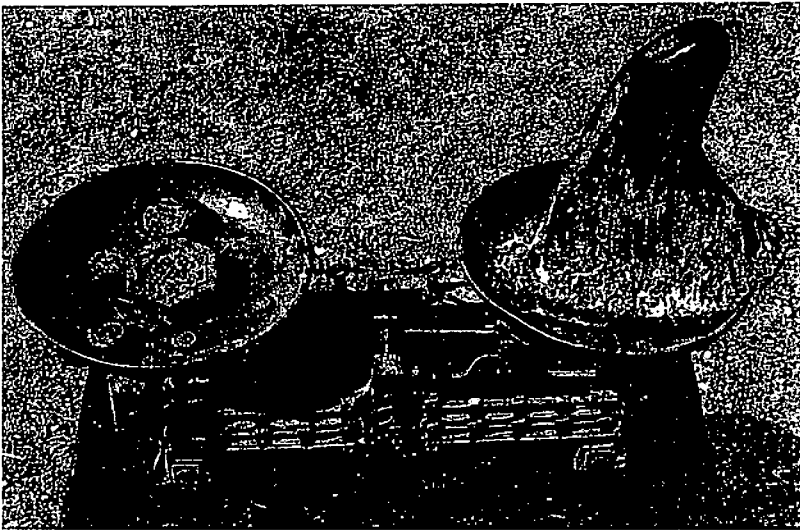
living outside China continue to believe rhino horn is superior to substitutes, making them a source of large profits for the drug manufacturers.

## South Korea: Big Horn Leap

If you really need some rhino horn, South Korea is the place to go. A 1988 TRAFFIC Japan survey found that more than 80% of Asian medicine clinics in Seoul carried rhino horn. The demand for rhino horn has risen with South Korea's rapid economic growth. As in China, the horn is mainly used for medicinal purposes, such as the common cure-all Chung Shim Won balls. These edible pills, wrapped in gold foil, are used to treat high blood pressure, hysteria, nervous system disorders, and insomnia.

The African rhino horn Korea buys comes from a smuggling network that imports horns from Africa and Southeast Asia to East Asia.

The government outlawed the use of rhino horn in manufactured medicines in 1983, then, after WWF initiated negotiations, banned horn import in 1986. However, unlike China and Taiwan, Korea has made no move to register rhino horn stocks. So unregulated internal and black-market trade continue. The country also baulks at joining



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**Tipping the scales:**  
Confiscated horns being weighed and labelled in India.

Tang started a five-year study in 1970 to find a rhino horn substitute. The company began to use water buffalo horn in 1974, but between 1974 and 1990, several tonnes of rhino horn were also used.

Several companies that could totally substitute water buffalo horn for rhino horn also continue to use rhino horn in medicines. Why does rhino horn remain a popular ingredient? Apparently, the large population of Chinese

### What Is TRAFFIC?

Supported by WWF—World Wide Fund for Nature and IUCN—The World Conservation Union, TRAFFIC, the Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce, is the world's largest wildlife trade monitoring programme. Headquartered in Cambridge, England, TRAFFIC works closely with the Secretariat of CITES to monitor trade in wild plants and animals.

CITES, despite two appeals from HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, President of WWF International. South Korea remains the proverbial tough nut to crack.

## Taiwan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back

Until 1988, buying and selling rhino horn was such big business in Taiwan that, in addition to sailors, professionals and businessmen smuggled it into the country from South Africa. A South African clampdown on exports has changed that. Since 1989, little rhino horn has entered the country from Africa. In fact, strangely enough, the demand for African rhino horn is actually down. The bad news is that Asian rhino horn is more sought-after than ever.

According to TRAFFIC consultant Kristen Nowell, Taiwanese are paying more than \$20,000 wholesale for Asian horn, investing just as they would in gold or old-master paintings. Retail, the horn costs up to \$60,000 per kilogram. Plus, "Taiwanese self-made millionaires are notorious for their conspicuous consumption of rare and exotic wildlife," says Martin.

Is banning the rhino horn trade in Taiwan just an exercise? In 1988, Martin found that Taiwan's 1985 ban on international rhino horn trade was unenforced. After the Legislative Yuan passed the Wildlife Protection Act to ban the sale and display of endangered wildlife in 1989, the rhino horn trade still thrived.

However, last year Taiwan took the important step of registering rhino horn stocks. And the Council of Agriculture recently said it may limit rhino trade to registered stocks

Average Cost per Kilogram and Uses of Rhino Horn, by Country				
	Year	African	Asian	
Guangzhou, China	87	\$16,304	—	Patented traditional medicines for export
South Korea	88	\$4,410	—	Traditional medicines, including Chyng Sim Hwan balls
Taiwan	90	\$4,221	\$54,040	Traditional medicines
Thailand	90	\$10,284	\$21,354	Trades large quantities of horn and hide, nails, dried blood, and other body parts

Source: Esmond Bradley Martin

over the next three years, when it will completely ban all domestic trade.

## Thailand: Renegade Trading

A country where almost any commodity can be obtained legally or illegally, it is not surprising that Thailand is one of the leading traders of rhino horn. "More rhino products are available in Bangkok than any other Southeast Asian city," says Martin. Smugglers flock to Bangkok with Asian and African horn. Even though Thailand is a party to CITES and trade in Sumatran rhino products has been banned since 1972, a 1991 TRAFFIC fact-finding trip there found rhino horn, skin, nails, penises, and dried blood readily available in Chinese medicine shops, due to what Martin calls "bureaucratic inertia."

Thailand's Forest Department, responsible for controlling wildlife trade, "is helpless because Thailand has never passed the necessary legislation that would enable them to crack down on the rhino horn trade," says Thomsen of TRAFFIC. "By not meeting its international obligations, Thailand is making a mockery of others' conservation efforts," he adds.