

THORNY ISSUES

RHINO MAYDAY 2012 HEATED DEBATES

On Tuesday 1 May, experts and concerned rhino supporters gathered at University College London to take part in this year's Rhino Mayday. The event, hosted by the Grant Museum of Zoology, saw eight speakers, who work in very different aspects of rhino conservation, update us on their area of expertise. The speakers then joined us for a panel discussion in which they and the audience hotly debated the thorny issues in rhino conservation.

Jo Paulson | Former Events Manager

Speakers discussed:

Mary Rice, Executive Director and Head of the Elephant Campaign for the Environmental Investigation Agency, talked about the lessons learned from legal sales of ivory in regards to elephant poaching www.eia-international.org

Gary Minns, President of the Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine discussed the history of rhino horn as a medicine and outlined herbal substitutes that are available. RCHM strongly condemns the illegal trade in rhino horn and other endangered species www.rchm.co.uk

Jennie Cook, Senior Keeper at Colchester Zoo showed us how target training has allowed the keepers to treat one animal with foot rot, which has improved her welfare dramatically. She also talked about the security measures taken by the Zoo since threats over recent museum thefts have increased www.colchester-zoo.com

Horst Lubnow spoke about the Greater One-Horned rhinos in Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam, India, and the translocations under Indian Rhino Vision 2020 to set up new viable rhino populations in Manas National Park.

Photojournalists **Steve and Ann Toon** spoke of their project to raise awareness of rhino conservation – Project African Rhino www.africanrhino.org

Nevin Hunter, Head of the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit, told us about the rhino horns sold in auction houses and how the UK has tightened measures for exports.

Vet **Nadia Alnaimi** informed us of the use of veterinary drugs by poachers to tranquilise and take the horns of live rhinos, and the measures that have to be taken to keep these animals alive in terrible conditions.



Our grateful thanks to all speakers and attendees for a very interesting day, and to the Grant Museum of Zoology for hosting us.



International Year of the Rhino

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia declared 5 June 2012 as the start of the International Year of the Rhino. This came from growing concern for the fate of the two rarest rhinoceros species, the Critically Endangered Sumatran (estimated at 130–190 animals) and Javan rhinos (estimated at 37–44 animals) in Asia, alongside the ever-increasing rhino poaching and demand for rhino horn that is affecting all five rhino species.

Katherine Ellis | Office and Communications Manager

Indonesia's President took this step at the request of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and other conservation organisations, as Indonesia is responsible for ensuring effective conservation action is taken to prevent the extinction of both the Sumatran and Javan rhino species.

The Indonesian government has committed to establish a high-level rhino task force of national and international experts, pledging to allocate sufficient resources to ensure Indonesia's rhino populations are well protected through regular and intensive monitoring.

During the International Year of the Rhino, it is hoped that all rhino range states in Africa and Asia will join Indonesia in giving priority to securing and increasing their rhino populations. Through collaboration with rhino-range nations and end-user countries of rhino horn, it is hoped that effective and well enforced deterrents could bring the illegal hunting and rhino horn trade under control.

The threats facing all five rhino species are greater than ever. If the International Year of the Rhino can highlight the critical status of some of the world most endangered mammals, perhaps the world will unite to bring an end to the horrific killing of these magnificent species.