



THE CRASH

Newsletter for rhino professionals

January 2014

New Year Update for IRKA

Jane Kennedy, President
International Rhino Keeper Association

Happy New Year 2014!

As the new president of the IRKA, I am blessed to share with you the highlights of our last year. As the year ends, I would like to give an update for the past year and a look to our future.

The year began with the plight of rhinos in Africa facing their worst year in decades. To date, almost 1000 rhinos have been poached in Africa alone, and poaching has increased in Asia as well. We, as members of the IRKA, have worked to raise money for rhino protection units (RPU) by sponsoring Cinco de Rhino celebrations where over \$10,000 was raised for the IRF.

We also held our eighth Rhino Keeper Workshop in San Diego. Over 140 people attended (106 full registrations!) from 9 different countries. Topics ranged from hand-rearing techniques to pathologies of rhinos. For some, the highlight

was spending the night at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, waking up and having the opportunity to work alongside Park keepers, and learning other ways to care for rhinos.

Our 2015 RKW is scheduled to be held June of 2015, hosted by the Chester Zoo in England. The Board of Directors knows most of us will need funding assistance to get there and are working on ways to help. While exact fees are not confirmed registration will be \$300 USD or less. Room rates will be similar to our 2013 rate near \$150 a night. Of course plane fares will vary greatly depending on your location. You can help by letting us know if you are interested in attending. We are looking into a member-speaker reimbursement to help partially fund keepers and get more of us to present at future workshops. With this we are hoping to provide scholarships or reimbursement assistance to as many members as possible. Please contact Wendy Shaffstall or me if you hope to attend or have any questions.

Calendar sales are again a big hit with keepers; both the 2013 and 2014 calendars were sold out. All profits from these sales go directly to rhino conservation in the field. Thank you for making this a success, and thank you Sara Wunder-Steward for organizing this.

A new venture is almost ready for launch here and overseas. Rhino bicycle racing jerseys can now be purchased with part of the profits going to the IRKA. If you race or ride, consider riding in one of these stylish racing uniforms and supporting your organization. Lara Metrione is our BOD member organizing this. Contact her for more information.

After the first of the year, a new partnership with iGive and Amazon Smile will begin. The IRKA will become one of the many charities people can give to when purchasing items through these websites. You can help by visiting these sites and encouraging your family and friends to shop here too. A portion of each sale will go to the IRKA, helping us raise important funds for scholarships, Keeper Development,

Inside this issue:

<i>Fight With Mike</i>	3
<i>New Training Comm.</i>	4
<i>Running for Rhinos</i>	5
<i>Open Mouth Training</i>	6
<i>Current Events</i>	7
Keeper Development Program	8
Rhino Buddies	9
New Members and Correspondence	10
<i>Supporting Institutions</i>	11

and other discretionary needs. Jonnie Capiro and Lara are working on this for you. A portion of the proceeds from sales of custom-made animal belt buckles from Barbies Basement Jewellery also goes to the IRKA. This initiative is thanks to Angie Snowie.

Becoming a Rhino Buddy is another way you can help. By sponsoring a fellow keeper, you can help expand our membership and its influence around the globe. We have a list of rhino keepers in other countries for you to choose from, hopefully developing not only new members but new friends as well. Sara is also heading this program.

The website is still in need of updating and has become one of my priorities for the New Year. I hope to work with Dave Clawson on developing a team whose goal is to have our website more user-friendly and offer a member's only section. If you are savvy with websites or want to be involved, contact Dave or me.

Earlier this year the Board approved purchasing BOD insurance. We have been operating without this needed protection but are finally able to provide this coverage; we hope to finalize which company to go with in the next few weeks. For those of you who may have held back serving on the Board, no more worries, you will be covered for basic liabilities.

Other highlights include our expanded Correspondence Committee which is trying to personalize your membership. I know I appreciated it earlier this year when we lost one of our breeding cows and received a personalized note to the team. Thank you Alissa Sandor for creating and heading this project. Jonnie Capiro has done a great job with our Facebook page. As members we all have access to use the secret Facebook group for discussion. In early December a member asked for advice on their rhino. If you have advice, go to our page and share your experiences! Also Jonnie would welcome any pictures or stories for the public Facebook page.

New for 2014 is a trial Training Committee that is being headed by Joe Hauser. For more details see Joe's article in this edition of the Crash.

Finally, I'd like to thank Adam Felts for his leadership of our organization. His years as president helped develop our foundation. He has not stepped down, just moved over to the vice-presidency while he works diligently in his new capacity as Associate Curator for the Columbus Zoo. Adam is spending the next 2 years helping develop a new African Exhibit from the ground up. While he may not work directly with rhinos anymore, we know he will continue to serve on our board doing all he can for our organization. Thank You Adam....

If you have any needs, concerns, or just want to talk, feel free to contact me or any member of the Board. We hope you have a prosperous and blessed New Year, and that the rhinos you care for prosper as well.

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