

In 2014, we hope to complete a *Conservation Strategy for Asian Elephants* and hire a full-time Program Officer. We continue to facilitate and promote the inclusion of range and population data in the IUCN African/Asian Elephant Database, and continue working with the CITES Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) program and the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS).

### **Simon Hedges and Ajay Desai**

Co-chairs, Asian Elephant Specialist Group

### **ASIAN RHINO SPECIALIST GROUP (AsRSG)**

The mission of the Asian Rhino Specialist Group is to foster conservation and management of three species of Asian rhinos and their habitats. The AsRSG worked closely with TRAFFIC to prepare the document on *African and Asian Rhinoceroses – Status, Conservation and Trade* for the CITES CoP 16 held in Bangkok from 5–14 March 2013. This is a report from the IUCN SSC African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups and TRAFFIC, to the CITES Secretariat in pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP15).

AsRSG assisted the IUCN SSC Chair's office in holding the 'Sumatran Rhino Crisis Summit' in Singapore from 1–4 April 2013, to assess the current state of the Sumatran Rhino in range countries; now only confined to Sumatra in Indonesia and Sabah, Malaysia. Over 100 participants from around the world attended this summit; the Indonesian and Malaysian delegation included high level officials from their respective ministries, including the Sabah Wildlife Department of Malaysia. The meeting expressed concern at the fast decline of Sumatran Rhino populations in range countries, and emphasized the need for time-bound strategies and actions to recover the species from the verge of possible extinction. A group of African rhino experts from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Tanzania also attended this summit and shared African experience with the participants. The IUCN SSC was represented by Mark Stanley Price and Rachel Roberts. An emergency plan for Sumatran Rhinoceros is in preparation, to usher a new era of hope for the dwindling and Critically Endangered Sumatran Rhinoceros in Indonesia and Malaysia.

The AsRSG assisted the Ministry of Forestry of Republic of Indonesia and the IUCN SSC Chair's office in holding the first Rhino Range State Meeting in Lampung, Indonesia on 2–3 October 2013. The populations of the Greater One-horned, Javan, and Sumatran Rhinos will each be managed for an annual growth rate of at least 3%. In other words, maintaining

populations and preventing extinction is not enough, the aim is to bring about the recovery of these species. The governments of Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal recognize the critical situation facing Asian Rhinos; the Sumatran Rhinoceros faces extinction unless decisive and urgent measures are taken, as outlined above. The Javan Rhinoceros could easily be wiped out in a single catastrophe, and the remarkable gains made in the conservation of the Greater One-horned Rhinoceros could easily be lost if the current trend in the illicit trade in high-value wildlife products continues. These species are of remarkable cultural heritage to the people of Asia. The governments of Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal have all agreed to the 2010–2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, and have committed to giving a very high priority to implementing all the actions outlined in the Bandar Lampung Declaration, which includes collaborating with each other and the international community; with the intention that by 2020 at the latest, the populations of all three Asian Rhinoceros species will be growing by at least 3% annually.

The Chair of the AsRSG would like to thank the members of the AsRSG for their support and cooperation in 2013, and donors including the WWF-AREAS Programme, International Rhino Foundation, Aaranyak and Yayasan Badak Indonesia.

### **Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar**

Chair, Asian Rhino Specialist Group

### **ASIAN WILD CATTLE SPECIALIST GROUP (AWCSG)**

The mission of the group is the promotion and long-term conservation of the Asian wild cattle species and their habitats by means of information-sharing, identification of conservation priorities and facilitation/delivery of these priority actions through collaborative conservation work.

In September of this year, WWF-Greater Mekong camera-trapped a saola in central Vietnam, the first wild photograph of the species in almost 15 years.

The Saola Working Group held its 3rd meeting titled 'Conservation through Collaboration'. Thirty-four participants from 24 institutions joined the meeting on 3–7 June 2013, in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Topics discussed at the meeting included; information sharing on current Saola status and conservation efforts; improving protection at key Saola sites; detection of Saola and how to do it; captive management of saola.

*The Indonesian National Conservation Strategy and Action Plan for Banteng* was published by the Ministry of Forestry, following a workshop coordinated by the AWCSG. This ten

Greater One-horned Rhino. © Bibhab Talukdar



Wild Buffalo – Central India. © Kishore-Rithie, Satpuda Foundation

