

# HORNPRINTS FROM THE PAST

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Photos by SDZG

Although rhino-less for its first 36 years, San Diego Zoo Global's past 63 years have been rhino-ful. Having at one time or another cared for four of the five recognized species, we are proud to have added to the collective knowledge about these massive, mighty, and, in many ways, still mysterious animals.

Barakas, a female Sumatran rhino, charmed San Diego Zoo visitors and staff alike, and gave us an opportunity to hone in on the fine details of this species' nutritional needs.





## Greater One-horned Asian Rhino

These massive mammals first left an impression on Zoo visitors in 1963, when a male named Lasai came to San Diego from the Basel Zoo. Lasai was then joined by a female named Jaypuri, and the pair eventually moved to the Park. They formed the nucleus of the greater one-horned rhino breeding group, which grew to become the largest initiative of its kind.

Once established, results came quickly: in 1982, we had the first birth of a second-generation, zoo-born greater one-horned rhino in the Western Hemisphere! It was an exciting moment, but there were even more milestones to come, including the recent birth of a fifth-generation, zoo-born calf. Working with other zoos and organizations, including those in India, we have been able to move zoo breeding populations in and out of the breeding group, which contributes to the genetic diversity. Over the years, our animal care staff and veterinary team have been able to refine husbandry and management practices for the species and share our knowledge with other organizations around the world.

## Sumatran Rhino

In the 1980s, as the wild population of this species dropped to fewer than 1,000, San Diego Zoo Global joined other US zoos in establishing the Sumatran Rhino Trust, working with the Indonesian government toward saving the species. With the goal of learning more about its reproductive biology and husbandry needs, as well as increase the numbers through breeding, a few Sumatran rhinos were brought to the US, including the San Diego Zoo.

Barakas, a 15-year-old Su-

matran rhino, came to the Zoo in 1988. She was later joined (at separate times) by two males and another female. “During this process, we learned a great deal about the species’ dietary needs,” explained Carmi Penny, director of collections husbandry science. “Our nutritionists worked on finding the optimum diet, and we discovered that ficus browse is vital to their well-being.” While we no longer have this species at our facilities, we continue to play a key role in supporting its survival—our horticulture team has regularly cut and shipped fresh ficus branches to the Cincinnati Zoo twice a week so the Sumatran rhinos there have the best nutrition possible.

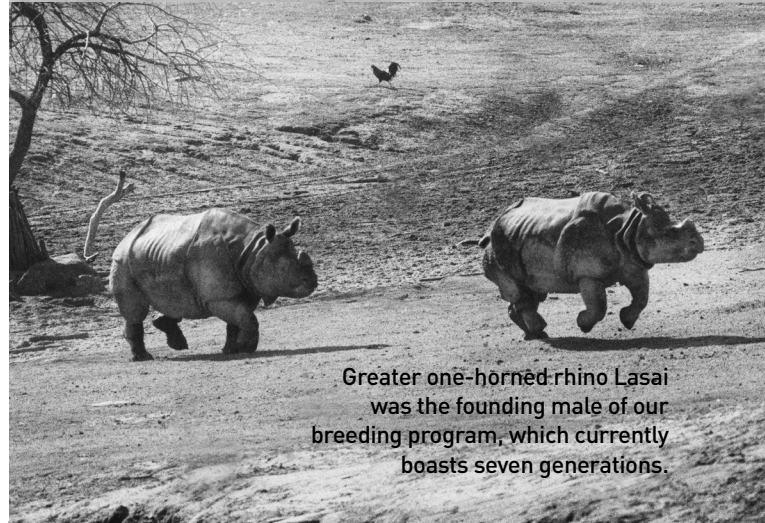
## Black Rhino

For the San Diego Zoo, 1952 was an exciting year. After many years, we finally had a rhino to share with visitors! The cause of the commotion, a three-year-old black rhino named Sally, was a beloved resident at the Zoo until her passing in 1985. Although she had two mates (and outlived them both), Sally never bred. She did, however, teach the public and the Zoo staff a great deal about her kind. Visitors discovered firsthand the magnificence of an animal they had only glimpsed in grainy movies, while the Zoo learned the dietary and husbandry requirements for thriving black rhinos.

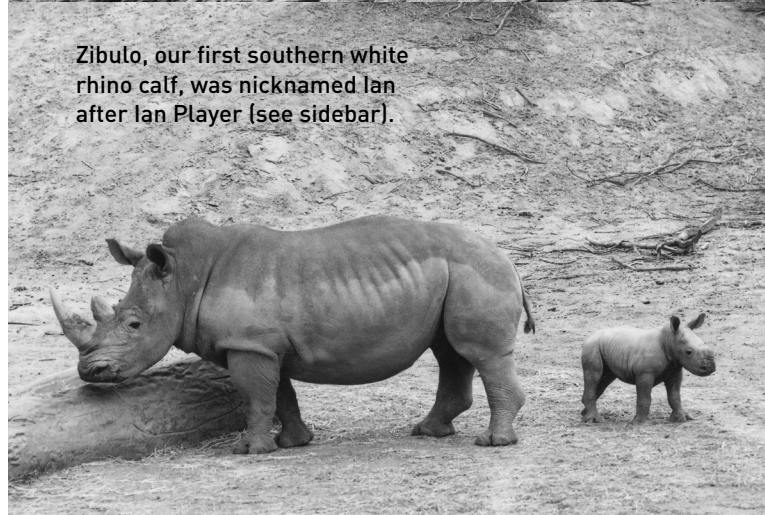
What we learned paid off. In 1976, the Park’s Dillion and Mulenda produced the first black rhino calf in San Diego. The female, named Nanyuki, remained at the Park and bred as well. “One of the things we’ve learned over the years is that each species of rhino is different,” said Randy Rieches, Henshaw curator of mammals at the Park. “Black



Black rhinos Barney and Sally were the Zoo’s first rhinos.



Greater one-horned rhino Lasai was the founding male of our breeding program, which currently boasts seven generations.



Zibulo, our first southern white rhino calf, was nicknamed Ian after Ian Player (see sidebar).



Caring for northern white rhinos Nola, Saut, and Nadi added to our knowledge of this nearly extinct subspecies.



## REMEMBERING IAN PLAYER

Ian Player's conservation career began in 1952 as a game warden assigned to the Umfolozi Game Reserve in South Africa. In his 1972 book *The White Rhino Saga*, he shares the story of the first white rhino he saw and that later "I could think of nothing but the white rhino. Never had I been so impressed and at the same time strangely involved with an animal."

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were fewer than 450 white rhinos in the wild. Aware that the rapidly declining populations were under enormous pressure from hunters, poachers, and farmers, Player devised and implemented an audacious plan to translocate rhinos to other game farms and parks throughout Africa. His efforts paid off, and the number of southern white rhinos rose. In 1966, he was awarded the Zoological Society of San Diego Conservation Medal for his courageous vision and success.

Anderson Borthwick, then Zoological Society trustee and later president, was greatly impressed by Player, and the two became friends. As plans for the Safari Park (then known as the Wild Animal Park) took shape, an agreement was reached for 18 southern white rhinos to be translocated to the new facility in San Diego. At the Park's dedication ceremonies in 1972, Player, then Zululand's Chief Conservator, shared his belief and support for the fledgling operation: "Some years back, I came here to conclude a deal with the San Diego Zoo... I believed then, and still do, that this



Ian Player (left) talks with Dr. Charles Schroeder at the Park, with part of the white rhino herd in the background.

Park is one of the finest places outside Africa for white rhino propagation. When your president Mr. Borthwick and your director Dr. Schroeder agreed, we merely shook hands on it and there was never a piece of paper between us—an example of the faith that exists between those men whose interest is in the animals of the world."

Ian Player passed away last year, November 30, 2014, and the conservation world lost a great champion. As we move forward, caring for our wildlife and striving to save species like the white rhino from extinction, we do so with gratitude to Mr. Player for the faith he placed in us.

rhinos need to be alone—just one male and one female. So we've given them their own area at the Park, and 14 calves have been born."

### Northern White Rhino

In 1972, the Park welcomed Bill and Lucy, two northern white rhinos that had lived at the National Zoo since 1956. The pair came to us on a breeding loan, in hopes they would reproduce in a larger habitat. The St. Louis Zoological Society then sent its northern white rhinos to the

Park, so that all four members of the species in the Western Hemisphere would be in one place. Unfortunately, the animals never bred.

In 1989, a male and two females—Nadi and our beloved Nola—came to the Park. The trio was joined a year later by Angalifu (who passed away last year), but again, no breeding occurred. The reasons are somewhat of a mystery, but it is possible that the animals were beyond breeding age when they arrived. Whatever the reason,

San Diego Zoo Global remains committed to helping this subspecies. The question is how, given the reality that there are only five of them left.

### Southern White Rhino

Our success in breeding southern white rhinos is something we are extremely proud of. In the lore of the Safari Park, our southern white rhino crash began with a handshake between humans, followed by the shuffling steps of the rhinos themselves. While the Safari Park

was taking shape, arrangements were made for a group of 18 southern white rhinos to be translocated from Zululand.

The newcomers were soon joined by a pair that had been at the Zoo since 1962. The male, Mandhla, had never shown a bit of interest in his female companion. However, upon his arrival at the Park in 1972, he almost immediately began courting most of the females. On October 11, 1972, the first US-born southern white rhino calf brought cheers from San Diego Zoo Global staff.

The young male calf was named Zibulo, a Zulu name meaning "first fruits of man or beast." The name was chosen because the rhino birth symbolized what the Park is all about. He was nicknamed Ian, after Ian Player, the chief conservator of the Natal Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board, who arranged for the first crash of southern white rhinos to relocate to San Diego.

We have welcomed the births of nearly 100 southern white rhino calves over the last 40 years. One of the rhino-sized lessons we've learned is that white rhinos are social animals, and females need to be able to form small groups, called coalitions, with other females. Our success also appears to indicate that large spaces are necessary for successful breeding to take place. Fortunately, we have that space at the Safari Park, and our keepers and researchers are continuing to work with and study our white rhinos to better understand the finer details of breeding new generations. ■



Wait, there's more! See photos of more rhino memories on your iPad.