



The Crash

Newsletter for rhino professionals

January 2016

Presidents Perspective:

Happy New Year! Over the years I've read many articles in our newsletter. This quarter's newsletter has several great articles that I hope inspire you to read on and learn about other ways to take care of our precious charges, our rhinos. The first recognizes our Tom Foose Memorial Scholarship winner Roxane Losey, and shares about one of the most misunderstood topics in captive rhinos, iron storage disease. Then keeper Jenn Fedesna of the Racine Zoo shares her learning experience from our Keeper Professional Development Program. (Jenn it was fun hosting you here in San Diego!) At the end of her article there is a link to see Judy Stephens of the Detroit Zoo share her presentation on KPDP from the RKW 2015. Next is an article from our Crash Editor and Christine Bobko detailing use of boots on a black rhino! This innovation may revolutionize how we care for some foot problems in rhinoceros. Don't forget to be sure to get your pictures in for the 2017 calendar contest!

For me personally in this New Year I'd like to say thank you to all of my colleagues from around the world who sent condolences on the passing of our northern white rhinoceros Nola. As a tribute to her and to rhino keepers worldwide I'd like to share the following...

Tribute to Nola

For over 26 years Nola the northern white rhino had called the San Diego Zoo Safari Park home. As most of us know she arrived here from the Druv Kralove Zoo, Czech Republic in 1989 with her coalition partner Nadi. Neither female had reproduced; both were entering their late teens, a time when most rhino females have already had several calves. Nola and Nadi took quickly to the large open exhibits of the Safari Park. They learned to enjoy the California sun and the large expansive pond in the exhibit. They were both happy. Unfortunately they never fulfilled the dreams that researchers, curators and keepers had for them. Neither female showed consistent interest in the male northern white rhinos they shared their exhibit with. Over the years both females were paired with 3 different males, Dinka, Saut and then Angalifu. Very little mating behavior took place, and as a result the northern white rhino is one of the very few animals we have not bred successfully at the park.

While Nola never had a calf she always had a following. At first it was her keeper staff that had the opportunity to know her intimately. Nola arrived with a toe nail problem that required hands on care. Nola's nails grew a bit curved upwards, so would not wear down normally. As a result keepers had to perform nail trims on her so she could walk less flat-footed, something that had she been left in the wild may have lead to her early demise. Nola received pedicures her entire life, at the hands of her keepers in Druv Kralove, and then at the park. Over the years most of the animal care staff has worked with her, meaning they all knew her quite well. Nola learned early on to trust the humans, they always wanted the best for her.

Because Nola was so tractable she also became an artist! A few years ago she started "painting" by rubbing her horn (which naturally curved downward) on canvases with children's non-toxic paints. Keepers learned that not all children's paints are the same! She actually had preferences for one brand over another based on the smell. Rhinos have very good noses and she made her preferences known. As most of us know she went on to paint pictures for auctions and rhino fund raising campaigns. She also painted a piece for the state capitol which was presented to Toni Atkins, California Speaker of the House.

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"Nola" and her artwork!

The recent deaths of 3 other northern white rhino have spurred many into action. In October 2014, 34 year old "Suni" died of natural causes in the OI Pejeta Reserve in Kenya, leaving 6 NWR left in the world. Then in December 2014 our beloved bull "Angalifu" (Angi to his keepers) died here at the Safari Park leaving us at 5. Then in July we lost female "Nabire" at the Druv Kralove Zoo in the Czech Republic. She was one of only 4 northern white rhino ever born in captivity. She died from a ruptured cyst at age 31. And now with the loss of Nola we are down to 3 northern white rhino in existence on the planet, all at the OI Pejeta Reserve. All 3 are not reproductive, so the OI Pejeta will have the distinction of being where the northern white rhino goes extinct. In the meantime Nola will still have her following even though she has passed. Her body has been donated to the Smithsonian Institute's Natural History Museum, where she will live on in posterity representing her species, the northern white rhino.

Yes, we lost our dear sweet Nola but what we need to keep our perspective on is what is happening worldwide to rhinos. EVERY DAY more than 3 rhinos die due to poaching for their horns. In 2015 1,170 rhinos died in South Africa alone...part of the mission of the International Rhino Keeper Association is to help stop or slow this tragic situation.

When Nola passed your responses to me and the staff at the park was overwhelming, sharing in our sadness and remembering the loving nature of our gentle giant. We received flowers, cards, letters, and emails from around the world saying they felt our loss too. I had 70 people post to my timeline the story of her death! Amazing, this one rhino died and the world took notice...

For me personally her death has given me something else to notice, we need to complete the mission and purpose of the IRKA. Nola gave us hope and love, but most of all she showed us courage. She had been so strong for the last few months of her life battling her illness. It's her "I'm not giving up" attitude that has inspired her keepers to keep on. She's wasn't just passing the time, Nola had been living. Here's my final thought about my friend Nola. I'm not going to give up on any rhino, ever. God wants us to do what's right for all species, not just northern white rhinoceros. Thank you for being part of the team that knows the right thing to do for rhinos. Thank YOU International Rhino Keeper Association members for caring about all rhinos. What WE do does make a difference.

Jane



The talented "Nola" painting a masterpiece!



I'm Done!

IN MEMORY OF NOLA