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Sumatran rhino dies weeks after landmark discovery due to an infection in her leg

- The rare rhino was caught in a pit trap last month in East Kalimantan
- It was the first physical contact environmentalists had made for 40 years
- Najaq, as the female rhino was known, succumbed to a leg infection
- The species is critically endangered with fewer than 100 in the wild

By VICTORIA WOOLLASTON FOR MAILONLINE

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A critically endangered Sumatran rhino has died weeks after its chance discovery on the Indonesian part of Borneo island.

The rare rhino was caught in a pit trap last month in East Kalimantan province in an area close to mining operations and plantations, where it was struggling to survive.

It was the first physical contact environmentalists had made with a Sumatran rhino in the region for 40 years after it was assumed the animal was long extinct.

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A critically endangered Sumatran rhino has died weeks after its chance discovery on the Indonesian part of Borneo island. Najaq, as the female rhino (pictured) was known, succumbed to a leg infection after her health deteriorated in recent days, Indonesia's environment ministry confirmed

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'The death of this Sumatran rhino proves they exist on Borneo, so we will continue protecting them,' Tachrir Fathoni, a senior official at the environment ministry, told AFP.

A post-mortem examination is being conducted to determine the official cause of death, he added.

Environmentalists discovered in 2013 that the Sumatran rhino was not extinct on Indonesian Borneo - as had long been thought - when hidden cameras captured images of the animals.

Conservationists had heralded the capture of the rhino in March as an exciting discovery, and expressed disappointment at the tragic turn of events.

'This is a very valuable lesson that shows saving a rhino can be very difficult, and needs the support of experts,' said WWF Indonesia head Efransjah, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

There were once Sumatran rhinos all over Borneo but their numbers have dwindled dramatically, with poaching and the expansion of mining and plantation operations considered the main reasons for the decline.

THE SUMATRAN RHINO

Sumatran rhinos are the smallest of the living rhinoceroses and the only Asian rhino with two horns.

They are covered with long hair and are more closely related to the extinct woolly rhinos than any of the other rhino species alive today.

The species is critically endangered with fewer than 100 remaining in the wild.

Adult males grow to between 2-4m in length and reach up to 1-1.5m in height.

Their life span is thought to be similar to other rhinos at around 35-40 years.



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This rhino was spotted in East Kalimantan province, in the Indonesian part of Borneo, pictured. There were once Sumatran rhinos all over Borneo but their numbers have dwindled dramatically, with poaching and expansion of mining and plantation operations the main reasons



The rare rhino was caught in a pit trap (pictured) last month in East Kalimantan province in an area close to mining operations and plantations, where it was struggling to survive. It was the first physical contact environmentalists had made with a Sumatran rhino in the region for 40 years

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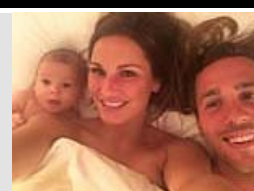
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