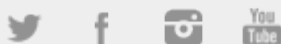


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The Red Rhino Blogs (Part V): Full Circle

By [Michael Dee](#)

 January 17, 2016

 Conservation



Andalas was the first Sumatran rhino born in captivity in 112 years
(Photo Courtesy of Cincinnati Zoo)

THE RED RHINO BLOGS

The announcement in August 2015 that [Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden](#) would send the last Sumatran rhinoceros, 8-year-old Harapan, in North America to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Indonesia's Way Kambas National Park was bittersweet news. For those who have had the rare opportunity to work with these animals, it's a sad parting of ways, but it is also a reason for hope. Thanks to valuable knowledge gained in North American zoos about the science of Sumatran rhino husbandry and reproduction, Harapan will hopefully start a new legacy at his ancestral home. For the staff members at the L.A. Zoo who were fortunate enough to work with Harapan and other Sumatran rhinos, it's been an occasion to reflect on these magical creatures.

(UPDATE: Harapan's journey to Indonesia took place at the end of October and he arrived safely on November 2, 2015.)

Full Circle

Prior to his

departure from Los Angeles in 2007, Andalus—the first Sumatran rhino captive-born in 112 years—had a special visitor. I had invited Steve Irwin, the famed “Crocodile Hunter,” to come out to the Zoo for a tour. We went



Andalus's footprint, June 24, 2004 (Photo Courtesy of Steve Romo)

to the holding area and Andalus greeted us with his usual high-pitched squeaks and I could tell that Steve was entranced with this marvelous animal. We spent about an hour with him and it was all I could do to pry Steve away to see the rest of the Zoo. Steve told me he had never been so enthralled with any other animal as he was with Andalus, and we added his name as another rhino convert.

Andalus was sent to his ancestral home in Sumatra escorted by Animal Keeper Steve Romo and former Zoo Chief Veterinarian Dr. Curtis Eng. Needless to say, they were met with tremendous fanfare.

After Andalus settled in, he was introduced to three females for possible breeding. All three females were captured because they were habituated to people and the Indonesian authorities were concerned for their welfare. One was trapped in a well and one walked from a remote village to an area that allowed her to be put into a crate and transported to the Way Kambas Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary. I should point out that the rhino followed the Rhino Protection Unit guards about 10 miles, and the trip took two days with a stopover in a cabin, the rhino slept outside with the guards inside. Of the three potential breeding partners for Andalus, only one female was receptive, Ratu, who became pregnant.

In 2012,
Andalus and
Ratu produced



Andalas and Ratu were gradually introduced, after Andalas arrived in Indonesia (Photo Courtesy of Steve Romo)

a male calf, named Andatu. In September of 2015, it was announced that Ratu was again pregnant, great news for the rhinos.

With the return of Andalas's younger brother, Harapan, to Way Kambas in November 2015, the breeding facility now has three males and three females. Unfortunately, the other two females have failed to reproduce, and unless other females are rescued and taken to Way Kambas, there will be no further chances of a much-needed boost of genetic diversity for the captive program. With the world population of Sumatran rhinos at about 100 wild animals, Harapan may have been the last Sumatran rhino that many people will ever have had a chance to see. The program has gone full circle, rhinos came out of Indonesia and produced offspring, and those offspring have returned to Sumatra. Let's hope, for the sake of the rhinos in Way Kambas, they continue to prosper.

Having been involved with this program since it started, I can say that I am honored to have been a part of it and to have had the opportunity to care for such a magnificent animal.

Read more about the history of Sumatran rhinos at the L.A. Zoo:

[Zooscape "Full Circle"](#)

(April 2007) 

[Zooscape "Andalas](#)

Summer" (Aug/Sept

2003) 

[A Very Special Birthday](#)

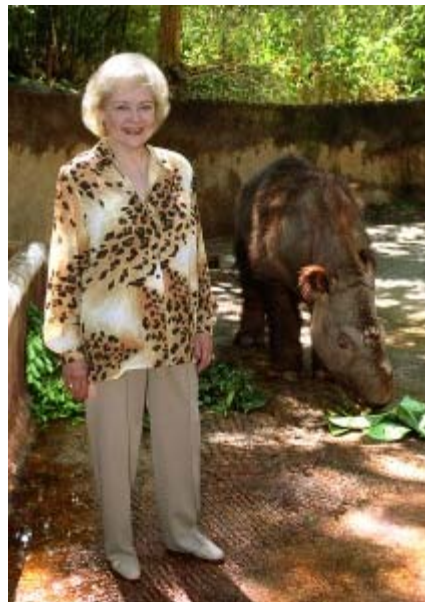
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[Rhino Kind](#)

[Remembering the Red](#)

[Rhinos](#)

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To learn how you can help in saving these wonderful creatures from extinction, visit:

[Cincinnati Zoo blog](#)
[International Rhino Foundation](#)

Betty White is one of many who Andalus charmed during his stay in Los Angeles (Photo by Tad Motoyama)



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