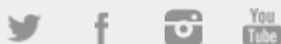


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Los Angeles Zoo &  
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### The Red Rhino Blogs: Harapan's Journey

 November 6, 2015

 Animals & Plants, Conservation



Sumatran rhino Harapan

PHOTO CREDIT: Stephen Meeks, White Oaks Conservation Center

## THE RED RHINO BLOGS

The announcement in August that [Cincinnati Zoo](#) and Botanical Garden would send the last Sumatran rhinoceros 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 is 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 Sumatran rhinos, it's 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.)

## Rhinos Revisited

By [Rafaella Goldsmith](#)

Smaller and furrer than its larger African and Indian relatives, the Sumatran rhinoceros is an enchanting creature. Staff and volunteers at the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens who knew Embam (or Emi) or her calf Andalus still fondly recall how expressive and charismatic they were. Yet despite their engaging character and successes in the conservation of this species, Sumatran rhinos aren't out of the woods yet.

The Sumatran rhino is listed as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and it is protected by the Indonesian government.



Emi and baby rhino Harapan at the Cincinnati Zoo

According to

Curator of Mammals Jeff Holland, there are fewer than 250 Sumatran rhinos left. The only remaining populations inhabit the islands of Indonesia and Malaysia. The situation became so dire in the 1980s that the Indonesian government began a cooperative effort with the zoos of Los Angeles, San Diego, Cincinnati, and the Bronx to protect and rebuild the global population. The two greatest threats to the Sumatran rhino's existence are deforestation and poaching. The former is a problem for many animals in Indonesia, especially as the palm oil and rubber industries continue to threaten native forests. Poaching is particularly significant for Sumatran rhinos; in Chinese medicine, every part of the rhino is considered valuable, although the horns are in the highest demand. And the rise of China as a major economic power means a bigger, more lucrative market for traditional medicine.

In the late 1980s, six rhinos were sent to the United States from Indonesia. Unfortunately, at that time not much was known about these animals. By 1997, only three remained. However, the conservation program saw its first real success in 2001 with the birth of Andalus. In 1996, his mother, Embam, had been transferred to Cincinnati from Los Angeles in order to breed with Ipuh, the resident male there. Initially, the pair had several failed pregnancies, but they were finally successful

when caretakers gave Embam a hormone treatment while she was pregnant. Andalus was the first Sumatran rhino born in a zoo in more than 100 years. The pair produced two more offspring: Suci, a female born in 2004, and Harapan, a male born in 2007.



Sumatran Rhino Andalus at the L.A. Zoo

PHOTO CREDIT: Tad Motoyama

In 2003, Andalus came to the Los Angeles Zoo, where he charmed keepers and visitors alike until his departure in 2007. He was the first Sumatran rhino sent to

Indonesia from the United States, and now lives at the Way Kambas National Park in Sumatra with three females. Although there have been no successful pregnancies in the Indonesian captive populations thus far, staff from the Cincinnati Zoo is teaching Indonesian caretakers about the hormone treatment that worked for Embam.

For now, the American population of Sumatran rhinos is limited, with only three individuals remaining, all related to one another. The Indonesian government is hesitant to remove any more rhinos from their native habitat, but zoos in the U.S. are still part of the conservation effort, sharing learned lessons and technical advice with their Indonesian partners. In the near future, Harapan\* will be transferred to Los Angeles from the White Oaks Conservation Center in Florida. It is hoped that one day Los Angeles will receive a female to breed with Harapan, but since rhinos are solitary in the wild, he will be content on his own.

Although most staff and visitors would agree that having baby Sumatran rhinos at the Los Angeles Zoo would be a dream come true, Holland makes it clear that conservation of the species is his top priority. "If they end up being successful with breeding efforts in Indonesia, where Andalus lives, that could change things quite a bit. If they are able to figure out what they need to do in order to breed regularly, then we really don't need this outside population in the United States. I could easily see the Indonesian government—which

maintains guardianship of all Sumatran rhinos—requesting the rest of the animals to go back at that point,” says Holland. “And if they are successful and can show a proven track record, I could see the zoos here agreeing to send them back.”

At this point, the U.S. program is at a standstill until rhinos produce more offspring. However, there are still other benefits from maintaining the program; for example, keepers, veterinarians, and researchers are able to study the animals more closely to learn as much about them as possible. The program is also increasing public education and awareness about the rhinos, as well as raising money for conservation efforts in Indonesia. Perhaps just as importantly, the Sumatran rhino program illustrates how techniques developed in zoos can be applied to the conservation of a species in its native habitat.

(\*This article was originally published in the November 2011 issue of Zooscape. Harapan eventually moved to the Cincinnati Zoo and is now back in Indonesia in the hopes he will start a family of his own.)

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

[Zooscape “Full Circle” \(April 2007\)](#) 

[Zooscape “Andalas Summer” \(Aug/Sept 2003\)](#) 

[First Encounter of a Red Rhino Kind](#)

[Remembering the Red Rhinos](#)

[Magical Creatures](#)

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

[Cincinnati Zoo blog](#)

[International Rhino Foundation](#)

Harapan

Sumatran rhino



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