

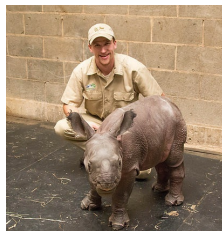
The Crash

July 2019 "Summer edition"

The IRKA newsletter: the leading network connecting rhino keepers.

President's Perspective

I hope everyone is having a great start to their summer and enjoying the warm weather, or in some cases very hot weather. In this issue of "The Crash," Justin Smith from Fossil Rim writes about his experience participating in the IRKA's Keeper Professional Development Program at Busch Gardens, Tampa. Justin took the opportunity before the 2019 Rhino Keeper Workshop to learn about another institutions rhino management practices. The KPDP program is a perfect way to gain hands on experience and to grow as a rhino professional. We all face challenges in our day-to-day work with our rhinos, but we can always count on other IRKA members to overcome those challenges and help us excel in rhino management. It is time to vote for the Board of Directors of the IRKA. The professional members will have from July 17th until July 31st to get their votes in. The candidate's biographies will be posted so you have an idea of what they have done for the IRKA, and how they will help the IRKA achieve its goals for the future of the organization. The new terms for the BOD members will start September 1st, and will have a 3-year term.



Roxane Losey from the Los Angeles Zoo, wrote an article about how she got involved with Global Conservation Force, and had the opportunity to head-start a mounted patrol in Africa. The Rhino Keeper Workshop plays many roles in the development of rhino professionals. Attendees have the opportunities to meet other members and start great conversations. This was the case when Roxane met Mike Veale, founder of Global Conservation Force, and later became a member of GCF's Board of Directors. Roxane is able to fill one of her dreams, being able to make a difference in Africa helping anti-poaching units on mounted patrols. Make sure to click on the videos that Roxane has attached and see what she got to experience. Thank you Roxane for your commitment to rhino conservation!

The Oklahoma City Zoo will be hosting the 2020 IRKA's Training and Enrichment Seminar April 2nd & 3rd. Take advantage of another opportunity that the IRKA is offering to help professional members gain experience and knowledge from other facilities. The TERS program is an inexpensive way to get out and learn on the years the Rhino Keeper Workshop is not being held. The Oklahoma City Zoo just recently built a new exhibit for their greater one-horned rhinos and introduced 2 new greater one-horned females to their collection. It will be a great experience for everyone involved!

Dr. Kees Rookmaaker, editor of the very popular Rhino Resource Center, has worked many years on making publications about rhinos accessible to everyone. If you happen to notice something different about a rhino under your care and have never seen it before, most likely someone else has, and it may be documented in the Rhino Resource Center. Make sure to go to the website and take a look around. You may find yourself on there for hours scrolling through many rhino publications. Even if you have visited the website before, I guarantee there is newer content since the last time you looked. We all thank Dr. Rookmaaker for his tireless efforts and making the RRC accessible right at our finger tips.

-Joe

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My KPDP Experience

at Busch Gardens



It's hard to believe that it has already been 4 months since the Rhino Keeper Workshop and my time that I spent with the Busch Gardens Tampa, FL Rhino Team learning how they take care of their crashes. I was fortunate to be able to couple my Keeper Professional Development Program with the Rhino Keeper Workshop at Disney to help cut some of the cost of my trip. **I took this opportunity to better myself because I felt that even with over a decade of working rhinos that there are many things that I have yet to learn.**

I am always interested in visiting my fellow animal care colleagues and spending an hour with them at their facility when I am on vacation. Let me tell you, it's another thing to be immersed into their daily care routines. My first day began with a 6 AM start time which meant waking up at 4:30 AM to be ready for my ride. (I now know that I have been spoiled with a start time of 8 AM for the majority of my career.) After collecting the daily feed from their commissary we began traveling towards their rhino barns. I was informed about safety checks that their staff uses for shifting their rhinos as we drove to check on most of the rhinos before meeting up with the rest of the team. We did all of the basics for each of the rhino groups mostly before the sun was up. As the rest of the team arrived (late shift personnel) we worked with their white rhino crash on getting weights before shifting them out onto Fossil Rim. But their exhibit was really unique to me in that Busch Gardens offers guide tours and has a train loaded with guest in with the rhinos; not to mention their work trucks. I inquired about some of the challenges that they face with guest being on tours through the exhibit with rhinos in it. Almost immediately after I asked, one of the rhinos touched the train with its nose and then trotted away like it was no big deal. It was a much different reaction than what I was expecting but was just a normal encounter to them. Before I knew it the early shift's day drew to the end and mine did to.

Another 6 AM start time for the next day. On the agenda for today was one of the things that I went to Busch Gardens hoping to learn more about. That was how other facilities did trans-rectal ultrasound work. I was able to see ultrasound work on their white rhinos. The technique that the veterinarian used was different from what I have read about and had described to me in the past. As he was doing the ultrasound he pointed out the different structures that he was seeing and a little about the positioning of the ultrasound probe. I was able to meet up with the vet to ask more questions later in the day as he was working on another animal. We were able to talk more about the specifics of how and what he was doing to get the images and was a great help.

I was also able to watch blood be drawn from the ear of several of their rhinos. I had seen technique tried before but this was the first time that I had actually seen it successfully done. After that I spent the remainder of the day with the late shift team and learned about their task before I was off to the RKW.



I tried to come up with a few things that I took away from this experience to give to y'all.

- 1.) There are things that you do at your facility that are normal to you but might be relatively new to others.
- 2.) Every facility has their own way of accomplishing the same high standard of care that we all aim to achieve and we can learn from each other.
- 3.) Lastly, make sure you confirm with your liaison what your schedule and start time is before booking a late evening flight.

I want to thank the Busch Gardens' Rhino Team for welcoming me into your facility. I also want to thank Fossil Rim Wildlife Center and the International Rhino Keeper Association for helping make this happen.

Member's meeting minutes

2019 Board of Directors Election

Election Timeline:

- June 1-30** Nominations open to members
- July 1** Bio questions sent to Nominees
- July 15** Membership deadline for July voting
- July 17-31** BOD Election (electronic)
- July 31** Last day paper/mailed ballots will be accepted
- August 1-10** Vote count will be completed
- August 12** IRKA Board will be notified of election results
- Aug 15** Nominees will be notified of election results
- Aug 18** IRKA members will be notified of election results
- Sept 1** New BOD term begins

The 2019 IRKA Board of Directors election runs from July 17 to July 31. Any professional member whose membership was current as of July 15, 2019 is eligible to vote. There are ten members running this year for four positions; four of the ten are running for reelection. The candidates are:

- **Christine Bobko**, Denver Zoo
- **Jonnie Capiro**, San Diego Zoo Safari Park
- **Cody Cseplo**, The Wilds
- **Jason Faessler**, Nashville Zoo
- **Tina Fess**, Seneca Park Zoo
- **Ray Hren**, Milwaukee Zoo
- **Janel Jankowski**, Jacksonville Zoo
- **Robyn Johnson**, Disney's Animal Kingdom
- **Justin Smith**, Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
- **Jade Tuttle**, North Carolina Zoo

You may vote at the following link beginning July 17th:

<https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/CdCsrt>

The four candidates with the most votes will be elected to three-year terms on the IRKA BOD. If you have any questions or concerns, you may e-mail the Election Committee at irkaboardelection@gmail.com or the Election Chair, Sean Ramsdell, at seanramsdell@gmail.com.

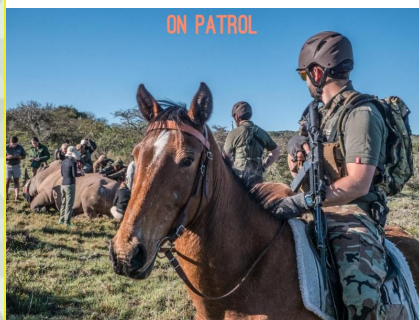
Creating Mounted Patrol Units in KZN



The last Rhino keeper workshop I was able to attend was at Chester Zoo in 2015 and what an amazing conference it was. I received the Tom Foose Scholarship which afforded me the chance to attend-- I met the wonderful Rotterdam rhino team that I had been in deep conversations with regarding starting up their large volume phlebotomy program and as fate would have it, I met a certain San Diego rhino keeper by the name of Mike Veale. When he gave his presentation on his personal commitment to field conservation, putting his very life on the line to help protect rhino I was in awe. Haven't we all dreamed of some way to put everything on hold

and head over to Africa to do our part? A few months later I got a call from Mike to complete his Board of Directors on his upstart Global Conservation Force. In those short four years I've helped guide GCF, raised thousands of dollars for our "boots on the ground" efforts and most wonderfully traveled to Africa three times, contributing in my own unique way to protect African rhino and other endangered species.

In 2017 a very special project found its way to me and it couldn't have been more personal. Dr. Will Fowlds was requesting GCF's help in starting up a new mounted anti-poaching unit to add to their already heavy duty anti-poaching arsenal. As a life time equestrienne I knew immediately that this was my personal "call to duty". In October 2017 I arrived at a reserve in the Eastern Cape of South Africa to start training rangers and selecting and training horses that would be suitable for the job at hand. Our two chosen rangers had very little horse experience and my time was short. I only had six weeks to get these two fellas as close to "safe" green riders as I could. The horses were an easier task, as we had multiple well trained horses gifted to us from a local safari trail company. The two young men worked tirelessly to make time to learn proper horsemanship and ride often. They would put in their typical twelve-hour shift protecting rhino-- often on the night shift-- and then show up on their own time for lessons, outrides on the reserve, and firearms desensitization for the horses. Their dedication to the horse unit on top of their active duties was truly remarkable. I packed all I could into that trip, crossed my fingers and hoped I had given them enough of a push to go forward until I could return. Their dogged determination carried the program for a few months and fortunately in January of 2018 a visiting vet from the UK stepped in as their new mentor. She was a critical player in the ongoing success of the horse unit and how it progressed in that time. I managed to clear another patch of time and returned to the unit in April of 2018. I was overjoyed to see how well the guys were doing when I arrived, their riding skills had improved immensely and their horsemanship was coming right along. My main duties while I was there were trouble shooting and training a particularly naughty horse and also continuing to teach some more advanced riding skills. One of my other goals of this particular trip was to host a community day for the local village children. They had already shown great interest in the horses during my previous trip. Allowing the children this deeper connection with the horses put them one step closer to connecting and caring about the wildlife around them. Despite living in close proximity to wildlife, many African children have never had the opportunity to see rhino, giraffe or lions and rarely have the pleasure of owning a pet. It is our hope that the horses can bridge the gap in how local communities start to value all animals. With a great deal of help from our surrounding partners and the same Safari Trails team, we took several horses to the local primary school and let the children ride for a bit. It was fascinating to watch the children that live at the village where we house the APU horses. They made it very clear to the rest of the class that these horses were "their horses" from their village. Their pride was palpable. Perhaps the children really will lead the way in rhino conservation!



It was with a bittersweet twinge I said goodbye to my horse unit and their new mentor as I knew they had come far enough along that they would no longer need me to drop in for future training visits. I was filled with pride for this unit, sadness that I wouldn't be an active part of their journey and 100% certain that ANY conservation effort is possible if you have the right people working towards the same goal. In a short 6 months we took a simple working theory and somehow made it a reality. My latest trip (in January 2019) found me in the Kwa-Zulu Natal region purchasing and delivering 6 new saddles to another mounted unit in the KZN region. This was a benchmark achievement for GCF to be able to supply these cost prohibitive items to the hardworking rangers that are already making their presence felt in this area. I also met up with Will Fowld's brother, Grant. He had seen GCF's good work with the horse unit in the Eastern Cape and asked me if I would help start a similar unit in another region of KZN. This endeavor proved extremely challenging. It was as if I had stepped back into the wild, wild west. Back into an age of remoteness that a person of the 21st century is ill adept at



maneuvering. There were bushmeat poaching incursions several times a week, no vet for miles, no farrier within a two-hour radius and if I'm being honest, no appropriate, available horses within a six-hour drive. Despite the nearly insurmountable challenges we did manage to build an exceptional stable with the hard work of the reserve manager, acquired 3 horses and started wildlife desensitization outings since these horses had not yet seen much wildlife. I would tell you about my near run in with a group of poachers while I was out on one of my training excursions but that is probably best told at the next conference over a beer. Suffice to say that incident left me with an even deeper respect for the anti-poaching rangers that live this threat every single day. Grant's new unit is a work in progress and I hope I will be able to return to help them more in the near future. My original Eastern Cape unit is now well past their one year "pilot" anniversary and going strong. I stopped in towards the end of my last trip just to visit and was treated to an amazing ride on the beach, a gift from my guys. A simple, yet heartfelt "thank you" for my part in helping them achieve the dream of their mounted unit. They also held another community day in my honor. They invited the local village children to the stables to learn to groom the horses and take a little ride. I of course wanted to jump in and help instruct, but I took a breath and held back. With misty eyes I watched the young men I trained to pick up their first horse hoof just a short year prior, patiently training these young village children to pick up their first hoof.



Throughout the last two years I have often felt that I was a tiny stone tossed into a pond that started this small ripple effect... that grew larger as it carried towards the shore with time, effort and energy. On that last day in Africa, watching the children care about the horses and look up to the rangers, I felt that those small ripples are growing into hopeful waves. Meaningful, local education, is indeed one of the biggest keys to making huge inroads to protecting animals most affected by poaching. Constructive conservation efforts aren't always about big plans and thousands of dollars to make them happen, they are often started by a good idea and fueled by vision and commitment to make it work.



by:
Roxane Losey

2020 TERS by Oklahoma City Zoo

April 2nd & 3rd



The Oklahoma City Zoo will be hosting a Training and Enrichment Regional Seminar Thursday, April 2nd and Friday, April 3rd. The TERS will showcase their 3 GOH rhinos and provide hands-on techniques with rhino restraint device training, ultrasounds, and blood collection. Participants will also create their own enrichment item to take home to their facilities as well. Space will be limited to 20 members for these two days. If you are interested in attending please make sure to stay tuned to our website and emails for registration to begin January



Contact OKC Zoo

[CLICK ON THE RHINO RESOURCE CENTER](#)



The rhinoceros is a fascinating animal. I say so, and many people agree with me, given that the animal appears in at least 23,000 publications ranging from books to scientific papers to popular stories. In the olden days, before the advent of the Internet, it was a time-consuming and strenuous task to retrieve what was written about the animals. Many hours had to be spent in libraries, many days were taken up by travel to distant places to discover references not available elsewhere. Maybe it was hard work, but

always exciting, because you would never know what amazing facts could be found on the next page that you would read. And even after 50 years looking for rhinos on the printed page, I still find facts and observations which are new or unexpected.

I had chosen the recent species of rhinoceros as a focus of study as a young teenager, even before I took up the study of biology and University. Every Wednesday afternoon I used to go to the Artis Library in Amsterdam, learning much about bibliography, about zoological history, about early travels in distant lands and about general zoology. I wrote notes in an ever-growing stack of notebooks, where possible I collected photocopies of the more important items.

In 2004, when websites had become fashionable, I discussed my collection with the Dutch rhino ecologist Nico van Strien. He asked his son Willem to construct a new framework for a website, which is still serving us well. Of course since that time the number of items has grown exponentially, partly because some less well-known items have become available from the scanning of libraries, partly because every year almost a thousand new publications are written and published. We now also have a small team of dedicated volunteer specialist editors to add items in their field of interest.

It is recognised that for conservationists in the range states access to publications in libraries remains difficult. But everywhere, busy professionals, including zoo curators and keepers, may not have enough time to search for everything that is being done in their field of interest. When you come to work in the morning, you may find the rhinoceros in the enclosure showing some new kind of behaviour, and you wonder if people and other zoos have seen the same thing. Visitors may ask the latest progress in conservation in Namibia or in Sumatra, and where do you find that information? That is when you click on the Rhino Resource Center (RRC). There you will find all the latest published information, easily accessible, readable, and completely free of charge. Updated almost daily. Of course, you may still need to find what you want and read through several papers, but it is a useful and enlightening experience.

There is no limit to what you find on the RRC about a rhinoceros. There also is an extensive picture gallery, now with almost 4500 images, both historical and recent. The RRC sends out a quarterly newsletter listing the latest publications, usually accompanied by news about new books or interesting articles or forthcoming conferences.

If you love the rhinoceros, visit the Rhino Resource Center once a month, and I think you will find much to reward your efforts and pique your curiosity.

Dr. Kees Rookmaaker,
Editor of www.rhinoresourcecenter.com

Making New Friends

The North Carolina Zoo has recently developed a partnership with the British based organization Wild Welfare. Wild Welfare promotes animal welfare issues by addressing the needs of facilities around the globe housing wild animals who may fall outside associations providing high standards and husbandry guidelines for wildlife under human care. The philosophy is one of non-judgement and empathy, and is employed through a combination of welfare assessments, hands on training, and collection planning strategies. Together, the NC Zoo is partnering with Wild Welfare in collaborating with the Zoological Park Organization (ZPO) of Thailand to elevate animal welfare standards. A relationship is building with two zoos in particular that have already shown great initiative to improve their level of care. The North Carolina Zoo is committed to providing developmental support of the animal welfare programs at Chiang Mai Zoo and Khao Kheow Open Zoo through a series of keeper exchanges and online sharing. We believe that as these zoos gain confidence and proficiency, they will become teaching models for the rest of the ZPO zoos and stand as an example of best practices in animal husbandry for the region.



Last month I was fortunate enough to be part of the first team visiting the Chiang Mai Zoo, working side by side with their staff for 10 days. It started with an overview of their facilities and an opportunity for keepers to show us what they were proud of and where they had concerns. We toured most of the zoo covering many species and habitats. We saw some major success stories already achieved as well as some holding areas and undesired behaviors they would like to amend. They showed us lions, and tigers, and bears (oh my!). We moved through birds, hoof stock, primates and pinnipeds. Chiang Mai is a beautiful zoo with large, natural habitats and some of the best green diets I have ever seen. The keepers and enrichment team are passionate and excited, and you can tell they have developed strong relationships with the animals they care for. We were happy to share our experiences enhancing outdated housing/holding areas and addressing undesired behaviors of our own. We loved recreating our enrichment success stories and learning new materials and devices from the staff at Chiang Mai.

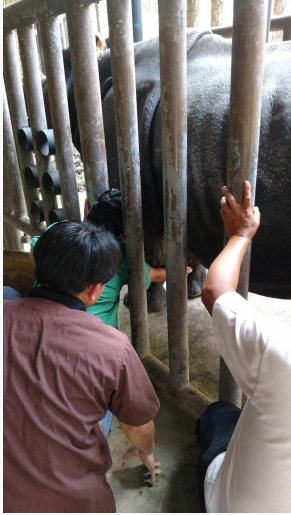


My personal favorite experience of the exchange was the opportunity to meet Ghali, the GOH rhino. Ghali is the only GOH in the country and was a gift from the King of Nepal to

the King of Thailand. At 35 years old they are no longer looking to put her back into a breeding situation. Vets are eager to provide preventative care and overall health assessments to this very special rhino and a nice chute has been built for this reason. Her keeper, of over 25 years, already had her conditioned to the chute and made attempts at desensitizing her to blood collection from the ear without success. All involved wanted more information on rectal palpations and reproductive assessments due to the increasing chances of pathology from an older, unbred female. With just brief observations of Ghali and her keeper working together it was clear they had good communication and trust already. I was pretty sure they were just a few steps away from success. However, I have only worked with African species of rhino, so I reached out to IRKA for feedback on my suggestions. This group never fails to be quick, concise, and thorough with advice. Thank you!



On my second visit to the rhino habitat Ghali was brought back into the chute and I had a chance to explain my theories of positive reinforcement. I explained, through the vet Dr. Tong as a translator, that NC Zoo never closes the rhino in on both sides. I discussed how true welfare is driven by choice and control, and the rhino is free to leave at



any time they choose. Often, something small like a needle prick becomes much larger in the rhino's imagination because the flight response is taken away and all that's left is the fight. After my opinion was translated I heard the keeper make a reply with a bit of a harsh tone and became worried I had offended him. Dr. Tong, my translator, momma bird, and protector in Chiang Mai, turned to me with a half-smile and said "he just said 'I told you so!' to me". He already knew what I was trying to say. Rhino keepers are passionate and intuitive the world over! We spent the rest of our time that day discussing the radial vein location, enemas, jackpot rewards and approximations. There was also what I can only imagine as an awkward translation of the 'nipple trick' and the nursing reflex in rhinos where they kick the hind leg out.

Two days later we returned to Ghali and her keeper with all the vets present to observe. While being fed in the chute we were able to penetrate the rectum to the wrist without her tensing and, after just two days of desensitization, we collected a small amount of blood from the right front leg. While everyone else involved beamed with satisfaction, Ghali's only response was enthusiasm for the melon jackpot at the end. She hadn't seemed bothered a bit! We did identify a few places in

the chute that needed modifications to ensure vet safety as well as some changes to the equipment that will streamline collections. The work to make this a success was done well before I arrived in Thailand. It came from the relationship between Ghali and her keeper along with the guidance and knowledge from vet staff. The only thing I added to the mix was a little confidence from experience that I learned myself from the folks of IRKA over the years. I cherish my time in Thailand and believe whole-heartedly that Chiang Mai and Open Zoos will become beacons for animal welfare in the region. I am grateful for what I learned while abroad and hope the relationship between these facilities grows to enrich us all.

Jade Tuttle

Changes in Membership



We've made several changes to the IRKA membership enrollment! To streamline the process dues are owed just twice a year, **January or July**. You should have received an email in February stating your enrollment month. All July enrollments received an email notification in June. If you are unsure when you need to renew, please contact: [Membership](#)

July is the month for half our members to renew

Visit our website

Correspondences

Births:

Female black "Kamara" - Blank Park Zoo
Male Black - Lincoln Park Zoo
Female GOH - Miami Zoo
Male GOH - Buffalo Zoo

Death:

Female white "Wagasa" - Rolling Hills Zoo

[New Members](#)



New Conservation Partners

Conservation Centers for Species Survival Silver
Nashville Zoo Platinum
Henry Villas Zoo Platinum

Conservation Partners are conservation organization or zoological institution which supports rhino conservation in accordance with the objectives and purpose of the IRKA. These partnerships often provide discounts for the supporting institution. It is important that as the IRKA grows we continue to garner the support from all facilities that are responsible for the protection and management of rhinoceros. We would like to extend our appreciation for the support from the following institutions, and hopefully we can add your zoo to this growing list! If you or your institution are interested in becoming a Conservation Partner, please visit:

[Support IRKA](#)

Platinum Conservation Partners



IRKA Partners



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