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Vets rule out poaching and disease in recent death of rare Javan rhino

by **Mongabay.com** on 29 May 2019

- *In March, a Javan rhinoceros was found dead in a protected area at the western tip of the Indonesian island.*
- *A necropsy carried out by veterinarians has now determined that the young rhino bled to death, due to injuries likely sustained during a fight with an adult male rhino.*
- *The finding rules out earlier fears that the rhino may have been killed by poachers or contracted an infectious disease from livestock living near the park.*
- *The estimated population of the critically endangered animals is now at a minimum 68 individuals.*

JAKARTA — Wildlife experts in Indonesia have determined that a rare Javan rhino found dead in March suffered massive bleeding from wounds likely inflicted by another rhino.

The finding rules out earlier fears that it may have been killed by poachers or contracted an infectious disease from livestock.

A patrol unit at Ujung Kulon National Park in Java, the last place on Earth where the species is found, [discovered the dead rhino](#) in a mud pit on March 21. The animal was identified as Manggala, a male Javan rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) that was too young to have a fully developed horn.

A recently released necropsy report said Manggala had suffered “intensive and widespread” bleeding. That caused the animal to experience hypovolemic shock, a condition in which the heart is unable to pump blood to the rest of the body, said Sri Estuningsih, a veterinarian from the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (ITB), who was involved in the post-mortem examination of the rhino’s body.



Veterinarians collect tissue samples from the body of the male Javan rhino for testing. Image courtesy of the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry.



Some of the samples collected from the body of Manggala, a juvenile male rhino that died earlier this year. Image courtesy of the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

Sri said the bleeding occurred in the rhino's stomach, neck and shoulder areas, where wounds were found. The team investigating the rhino's death previously speculated that the wounds resulted from an attack by an adult male rhino.

Sri said they also found footprints from a different rhino at the location where Manggala's body was discovered.

“[Manggala] seems to have lost a fight with another rhino, possibly because he had entered the other male rhino’s territory,” Sri told Mongabay via text message on May 23.

Last year, two Javan rhinos were found dead from natural causes, but officials reported four births (two males and two females). The estimated population of the critically endangered animals is now at a minimum 68 individuals: 57 adults and 11 juveniles. Overall, there are believed to be 37 males and 31 females living in Ujung Kulon, a protected zone that covers 1,230 square kilometers (475 square miles) at the western tip of Java.

While conservationists are heartened by evidence that the Ujung Kulon population is continuing to breed, calls are mounting for the Indonesian government to establish a second site for the species. A [tsunami](#) struck the Ujung Kulon area in December 2018, and although no rhinos were known to have been killed or injured in the incident, it highlighted the peril facing a species confined to a single habitat. Experts also fear that an outbreak of [infectious disease](#) in Ujung Kulon could wipe out the remaining rhinos.



The death of the young male, known as Manggala, brings the global population of Javan rhinos down to 68. Image courtesy of the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

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