

AUDUBON
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Wilderness hikers—at least the most adventurous—will be sampling edible plants in the mountains this summer. With a good guidebook and a common-sense approach, this is a harmless experiment. But casual plant identifiers should heed this cautionary tale from last summer:

A twenty-five-year-old Yellowstone National Park employe, camping with two fellow workers, died after eating water-hemlock root. The three mistook the deadly water-hemlock for edible yampa root, which grows abundantly in the Rocky Mountains. Both are members of the parsley family and resemble each other, with narrow leaves, clusters of lacy blossoms, small bulbous fruit, and

tuberous roots.

The yampa plant (*Perideridia gaudneri*) was known to explorers Lewis and Clark and John Frémont, who enjoyed its sweet parsnip-like flavor. It is a favorite of edible plant buffs today.

Water-hemlock, on the other hand, is known as the most poisonous plant in the north temperate zone. The variety that caused the worker's death, *Cicuta douglasii*, is one of two species native to the Rockies. Livestock often die from eating it, and a human can suffer violent convulsions and death from eating a piece only the size of a marble.

In eating a quantity of the water-hemlock root, the young man ignored one of the more urgent warnings given

in guides to edible wild plants: Do not eat any plant in the parsley family unless you are absolutely sure you have identified it properly. Even then, the rule is to sample first, eat later. A second member of the trio who only nibbled the root survived.

A Sumatran rhino rescue project is shaping up on the other side of the world. And zoo officials are hopeful that eventually several pairs of these little-known members of the rhinoceros family can be brought to this country for captive breeding.

The Sumatran is the smallest of the five rhino species and the only one that can be nicknamed the woolly rhino. Instead of looking as if armor-plated, it has great furry patches on its back and legs and is little changed from the rhinos of forty million years ago. But if not aided now, it could be making its last stand, since it is considered one of the dozen most endangered animals in the world.

Rescue arrangements have been slow in developing because of the shifting political scene in lands liberated from colonial rule in the years after World War II. Delicate negotiations have been under way for some time in Malaysia and Indonesia. Most of the 500 to 700 remaining rhinos are on Sumatra, part of Indonesia, but peninsular Malaysia has another fifty to one hundred, plus twenty to forty on Sabah, on the north-east coast of Borneo.

American and British zoos have committed both funds and personnel in an attempt to preserve still viable populations of Sumatran rhinos and their habitats. But where hunters and loggers have already wreaked havoc on populations, the remnant animals are being captured. These will be used for captive propagation in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Still under discussion is a proposal to export several pairs of the rescued Sumatran rhinos to U.S. and British zoos. Warren Thomas, director of the Los Angeles Zoo and coordinator of the rescue project for the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, says he is "cautiously optimistic" that an agreement eventually will be reached.

Fur coat sales are triple what they were a decade or so ago when anti-fur protesters were active. Those pickets



Water-hemlock: The most poisonous plant in the north temperate zone.