

Expanding the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary

“The Sumatran rhino is arguably the most endangered large mammal on Earth, with fewer than 80 individuals surviving in four fragmented populations on Indonesia’s island of Sumatra and in central Kalimantan, Borneo. The decline of the species was initially caused by poaching for its horn for use in traditional Asian medicine. Poaching remains a threat today, with the risk of extinction exacerbated by habitat fragmentation, human encroachment, small population effects, and potential natural or human-caused disasters”. Susie Ellis, Executive Director of the International Rhino Foundation, [The Horn 2016](#)



Figure 1: Sumatran rhinos can enjoy semi-wild existence in 247 acres of heavily protected forest at Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary. Credit: Kelly Russo

Whilst Sumatran rhinos are still under threat from poaching, a key risk to the species is that the remaining Sumatran rhinos are now found in small, fragmented populations, which mean it is difficult to find one another and breed in the wild. Recognising the threat to the species, the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary was built to actively help grow the Sumatran rhino population in-situ, and encourage a genetically diverse population of Sumatran rhinos in the wild.

CeCe Sieffert, Deputy Director of the International Rhino Foundation, Save the Rhino International’s partner organisation, explains in [The Horn 2017](#): *“The Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary is currently home to seven Sumatran rhinos all enjoying semi-wild existence in 247 acres of heavily protected forest, whilst being scientifically monitored as part of an intensive breeding programme. Two new calves have been born in four years, and now plans are afoot to move more wild Sumatran rhinos into the Sanctuary to encourage further breeding. Thanks to its success, the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary needed to double in size!”*



Figure 2: Male Andatu was born at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in 2012. Credit: Kelly Russo.



Figure 3: Andatu enjoys a shower from his keeper. Credit: Kelly Russo.

The project to expand the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, with the aim of doubling its size to increase capacity to hold and breed Sumatran rhinos, was generously supported by Save the Rhino International and our partners and donors, including Fondation Le Pal Nature.

The International Rhino Foundation, our partner organisation, and YABI (Yayasan Badak Indonesia or the Rhino Foundation of Indonesia) developed a strategy to expand the capacity of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, with a goal of creating additional forest enclosures and stalls to double its capacity for holding and breeding Sumatran rhinos. Final plans included doubling the sanctuary's holding space; building permanent quarantine, maternity, and ambassador animal enclosures; improving infrastructure with solar power, energy efficient generators, additional wells, staff and guest quarters, laboratory space, and equipment, and other improvements.

This update will cover the activities under all of the projects' objectives that Save the Rhino International and its donors, including Fondation Le Pal Nature, supported between 1 January and 31 December 2017 to expand the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Indonesia.

Construction process to expand the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary

The original objective of the project was to create additional forest enclosures and stalls to double the SRS capacity for holding and breeding Sumatran rhinos by 31 December 2017.

The major components of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary expansion included land clearance and further fence construction, and the quarantine facility has been completed. The new laboratory facility has been built and is currently operational. New generators have been installed at the SRS and are now fully operational. This phase is now about 95% complete, and all major activities are expected to be fully completed in early 2018.



Figure 4: Exterior of the completed Laboratory. Credit: International Rhino Foundation.



Figure 5: Delilah (right) at one year is almost indistinguishable from her mother, thanks to the high quality care she receives at the SRS. Credit International Rhino Foundation

As detailed above, we're delighted to report that the expansion of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary has resulted in the capacity to house rhinos for captive breeding at this state-of-the-art facility doubling. In the long term, the role of captive breeding in the overall recovery of the Sumatran rhino will be enhanced by all these amazing efforts!

Achievements for the Sumatran rhino in-situ population



Figure 6: Newest Sumatran rhino calf, 'Delilah', walks through her rainforest enclosure. Credit: International Rhino Foundation.



Figure 7: Delilah and Ratu are enjoying their birthday cake. Credit: International Rhino Foundation.

The Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary celebrated a big milestone for the captive-breeding population – rhino calf ‘Delilah’ celebrated her first birthday on 12 May 2017. Delilah, meaning “gift from god” in Arabic, is certainly a gift to her species, and represents hope for the long-term survival of the species and captive-breeding programme at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary. Delilah is now nearly full-grown and will soon be separated from her mother.

Thank you Fondation Le Pal Nature

“Achieving our shorter-term goal of expanding the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary will catalyse its longer-term development into a true Centre of Excellence for Sumatran rhino propagation and research, allowing us to more fully understand this enigmatic and magnificent species while further contributing to its long-term survival”. Susie Ellis, Executive Director of the International Rhino Foundation, [The Horn 2016](#)

Save the Rhino International is very grateful to Fondation Le Pal Nature for your fantastic support of the Sumatran rhino conservation and significant contribution to the exciting expansion of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary. Once fully complete, it will be a global centre of excellence for the research and breeding of this Critically Endangered species. Please pass on our thanks to all the team and visitors at Fondation Le Pal Nature!



Figure 8: Harapan at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary. Credit: Kelly Russo.