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**TIGER RESERVES**



**WORKSHOP**

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**MANAGEMENT**



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CASE STUDY: RHINOCEROS RE-HABILITATED IN A TIGER RESERVE

# Successful Re-introduction and Re-habilitation of Great One-horned Rhinoceros, Dudhwa National Park, UP

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The journey continues and yes, it is continuing successfully. This journey began long back in the year 1984 with seven members and still the number is increasing. This is the success story of one of the most successful re- introduction / rehabilitation programme of any wild animal in India. The one horned Rhinoceros, scientifically known as *Rhinoceros unicornis* was re-introduced in Dudhwa National Park of State of Uttar Pradesh in 1984 and they are rehabilitated well.

The rehabilitation saga started with the thought process in the minds of the then policy makers after getting the information that this wild beast roamed around the areas of Dudhwa in the Nineteenth century and due to reckless poaching vanished from there. With this information in mind, a feasibility study was done and the area was found to be appropriate for the re-introduction of Rhinoceros. Now, the challenge ahead was to bring Rhinoceros from elsewhere. There were two options- one state of



km. wide) with a perimeter of 24 kms. This area was demarcated and fenced with metal wires in four rows, supported with wooden posts and energized by solar energy to check movement of Rhinos outside the fenced area. Living inside the prime area of Dudhwa National Park and enjoying maximum protection, they have bred very well. Every year, there is arrival of one or two new members and currently with the arrival of one new member in the month of May- June, the total number has reached to the level of 31.

In order to protect them well, regular patrolling & monitoring of the area is done with the help of Elephants and departmental vehicles. There are six elephants, namely Roopkali, Pushpakali, Pawankali, Pakhri, Sundar & Bataliq with a set of Mahaout and Chara-

Assam in India & another Bardia or Shukla Phanta Reserve in Nepal.

With the active support of the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the agreement of Governments of both the States, 6 Rhinos were picked up from Pavitara WLS of Assam and were brought to Guwahati zoo for further transportation. One female Rhino died there. Out of 5 Rhinos, 2 were male and three were female. Out of the three females, two died before the programme started. This was a precarious situation and only one female was left. This would have proved to be a setback but thanks to the agreement made with Govt. of Nepal, the Dudhwa Park Administration got 4 female Rhinos from Shukla Phanta Reserve of Nepal in lieu of 16 elephants. Now, the seed population became 7 with 5 females and 2 males.

The major challenge now was how to keep this small population protected in such a huge area; their day to day monitoring, their up-keeping. The vegetation of the area was very much similar to other Rhinoceros habitat of the country with the exception of woodland dominated by Sal trees interspersed with *Tiliacora acuminata* at the ground floor. The area selected was a miniature of Dudhwa National Park, an ideal mix of grassland, woodland and wetland. Two base camps of Rhinoceros Rehabilitation Area are in the South Sonaripur range, one at Salukapur and other at base camp.

The area selected was 27 sq. km. (9 km long and 3

cutter on each elephant. They're the main show managers. Daily monitoring is done with their active help. The presence of particular Rhino is noted down and the compiled record of their sighting is sent to the Divisional as well as Circle headquarters every fortnight. To keep the energy flow in the fencing trouble free, 8 fence-watchers render their services day and night. The grasses below the first line of wire are cut regularly to avoid any short circuit. Entire fencing is visited on a daily basis by the fence watchers and any damage to the fence is reported immediately to the Range as well as Division HQs, which in turn gets it repaired immediately.

This re-introduction and re-habilitation programme becomes more special as it is happening inside a 'Project Tiger' Area, where the main focus is on Tiger & Swamp deer, which are the two most important flagship species. The aspect which is even more heartening is the fact that with the stringent protection in this area, it is an ideal breeding ground for Tigers. In the year 2010-11, this area was home to two Tigresses, one with two cubs and another with four. At times, 6-7 tigers/ tigresses share the fenced area. Besides, this is the centre of attraction for tourists, who always wish to visit this area on elephant back.

So, this is India's one of the most successful Re-introduction/ Rehabilitation Programme, which needs to be emulated elsewhere, wherever it is possible. The saga continues and continues further.....