



The Crash

December 2019 "New Year's Edition"

The IRKA newsletter: the leading network connecting rhino keepers.

President's Perspective

As we close out 2019 and move into the New Year, we can look back at the past year and be very proud of what the IRKA has accomplished. It was a very exciting start as we held our 20th Anniversary of the Rhino Keeper Workshop at Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando, Florida. Rhino professionals from around the world came together to collaborate and share their knowledge on modern rhino management, and learned about rhino conservation initiatives taking place in Africa and Asia.

We welcomed Inov Sectionov (IRF Indonesia Program Coordinator) and Sumadi Hasmaran (Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary Manager) to the workshop and took them to several rhino facilities in the United States to develop our professional relationship with them.

The IRKA donated \$14,000 to the International Rhino Foundation to purchase field cameras that were placed in Bukit Barisan Seleton National Park to help locate the few Sumatran rhinos that are living in that area. As we celebrated World Rhino Day, the IRKA held our first online auction, and sold limited edition Sumatran rhino t-shirts, which proceeds will then be donated for more rhino conservation efforts. During the year, we had a few professional members participate in the IRKA's Keeper Development Program. Amber Berndt from the Indianapolis Zoo, and Nicole Richter from Disney's Animal Kingdom wrote about their KPDP experience in this issue of the CRASH. It has certainly been a very successful year for our organization!

As this is a time for a season of giving, the IRKA is donating another \$10,000 to the International Rhino Foundation in support of the habitat restoration project in Way Kambas National Park, Indonesia. Wildfires recently decimated a large area of habitat that is crucial for the Sumatran rhino. This became a high priority for the IRF to restore this habitat for both wild Sumatran rhinos, and browse for the Sumatran rhinos that reside in the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS). This is even more important at this time, as more Sumatran rhinos will be brought to the SRS to be placed in a managed breeding program. This donation is possible because of everyone that participated in the online auction, t-shirt sales, and a donation from our friends with Horns and Heroes. We are all proud to play a role in this conservation effort!

If you are interested in getting hands on experience with rhino training and enrichment, don't forget to take a look at the TERS program hosted by the Oklahoma City Zoo in April 2020. It is a very inexpensive way to get involved, continue learning, and build connections with other rhino professionals. I also look forward to continue the planning process for the 2021 Rhino Keeper Workshop hosted by Fota Wildlife Park in Ireland! Fota rhino keeper, Cormac Kenny and Wildlife Park Director, Sean McKeon are already hard at work planning out the details for everyone's trip to Ireland.

Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Susie Ellis for being an advisor for the IRKA's Board of Directors for many years! Susie will be retiring as the



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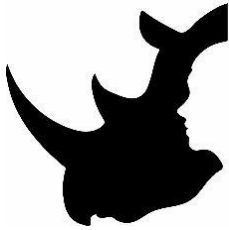
Conservation Partners

Executive Director of the International Rhino Foundation in February, 2020 to have more time with her family. Susie has played an intricate and crucial role in the development of the IRKA since she has stepped in as an advisor. She instilled passion for rhinos and taught us a great deal over the years. She has been a mentor and a friend to many of our members who was lucky to know her. I hope the IRKA can make her proud as we use what she has taught us, and continue to support rhino conservation around the world. Thank you, Susie, from the bottom of our hearts!
I hope everyone has a happy holiday and healthy new year! Cheers!

-Joe



Biennial Rhino Keeper Workshops



The International Rhino Keeper Association is excited to announce the 2021 Rhino Keeper Workshop will be hosted by [FOTA wildlife park](#) in Carrigtwohill, Ireland!

Save the Date for Spring 2021 RKW

Fota Wildlife Park is a 100-acre (40 ha) wildlife park located on Fota Island, near Carrigtwohill, County Cork, Ireland. Opened in 1983, it is an independently funded, not-for-profit charity that is one of the leading tourism, wildlife and conservation attractions in Ireland.



KPDP at the Wilds

Indianapolis Zoo has done two dental exams on our older southern white female. Both were considered exploratory due to symptoms of weight loss, dropping pellets, drooling, spitting out chewed hay wads and bad breath. Both cases resulted in removing a bad tooth and filing points. We have minimal experience in immobilizing rhinos so I have utilized the IRKA to enhance my knowledge in order for our institution to have success with events of this magnitude. Both of these procedures gave us difficulty with getting the rhino down where we preferred her to go down. I had the idea of utilizing ropes to assist her in going down so I reached out to The Wilds and a couple other facilities that utilize this method. The Wilds recently immobilized three males and I had the opportunity to watch and learn first hand. I gained invaluable information from this experience and it wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for the IRKA connections I have made with other members of this fantastic organization. Although I hope we won't have the need to immobilize in the near future I feel confident our next experience will go even better due to what I have gained from other rhino experts.





Amber Berndt
Indianapolis Zoo

KPDP at San Diego Zoo Safari Park



Having been granted the opportunity to participate in the Keeper Professional Development Program through the International Rhino Keeper Association has been an invaluable experience. Being welcomed by and connecting with keepers who share similar goals and ambitions in their work has filled me with even more passion.

My time spent at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park was incredible! I was able to shadow multiple rhino husbandry programs over 4 days in October 2019. Talking to keepers and circulating ideas for training, enrichment, and medical care opened up a whole new compartment in my brain. It helped me look at things in a different light, and consider new and different ways to accomplish similar goals. I was thrilled to also contribute possible new ideas to those keepers in exchange, to aid and improve their own operations.



Meeting the rhinos that had been brought to the park to aid in the long-term Northern White Rhino Conservation Project was indescribable. Seeing the rhino artificial insemination training and meeting baby Edward both made the project very real for me, and I am proud of the work everyone has put into this project. It is evident that we in IRKA do the best we can for the future! We are all here to save a species that we all truly care about; we share both our passion and the animals we care for with the public, so that they too will extend the care that we show. Saving these rhinos, and all the other animals we work with, is a role we are all actively participating in. I am truly happy to be a part of such a wonderful group of dedicated and outstanding professionals.

Nicole Richter
Disney's Animal Kingdom

Don't forget our "Keeper Professional Development Program" where you can spend time learning hands-on at institutions across the country. Scholarships are available! Learn more below:

Facility Focus: Nashville Zoo

Meet Our Crash

Here at the Nashville Zoo we have a crash of 1.4 Southern white rhinos. In April 2017 we imported four young females from South Africa, originating from 3 different parks. We guessed their ages to be around 3-3.5 years old at the time we received them. Our girls took a bit of adjusting to their new environment (especially as our zoo sits under the flight path for the Nashville International Airport) but they have since acclimated and are doing great.



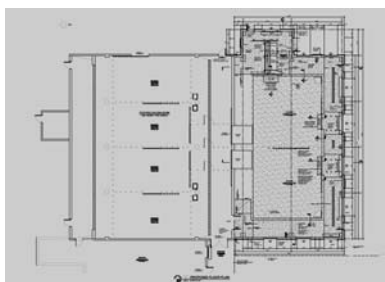
We had the 4 girls for a little over a year and a half before we received a male. During this time we participated in the Cincinnati Zoo's Center for Conservation and Research for Endangered Wildlife (CREW) program with Dr. Monica Stoops. Through this program we collected fecal samples on each of our females 3x weekly for over a year in order to track their progesterone levels to determine if and when they are cycling. We found out that all 4 of our females had reached maturity and were cycling normally and we were ready to receive a male.



In Dec 2018 we received a young male from the Center for Conservation of Tropical Ungulates (CCTU) in Florida. TC was 4.5 years old when he moved to the Nashville Zoo. In the past year he was introduced to our crash and spends his days on exhibit with the ladies; he can typically be found within 20 feet of the crash. The girls are very interested in him and allow him to stay relatively close while still minding his manners and keeping a slight distance. TC is starting to show signs of maturing, however we have yet to see any breeding behaviors.



Our facility was originally built for elephants and we remodeled it to better accommodate a breeding facility for rhinos. It currently consists of 2 barns and an exhibit space. The main barn is 4 stalls (20ft x 40ft each), one of which has a solid barrier in case of a separation need, as well as a solid substrate with heated floors. Our secondary barn which connects to the main barn is 2 stalls (30ft x 30ft each) with sand as the substrate. We have a rhino restraint device connected to the sand barn with a floor scale to easily weigh the rhinos. Each barn has a chute to the exhibit and they can connect to make a roundabout between them as well. We have a 3.5 acre exhibit space with several tree islands to provide more dimension.



Nikole Edmunds



2020 TERS by Oklahoma City Zoo

April 2nd & 3rd

*****Registration is opening soon!! Only 20 slots available ***
Apply for scholarship funds!**



The Oklahoma City Zoo will be hosting a Training and Enrichment Regional Seminar Thursday, **April 2nd** and Friday, **April 3rd** 2020. 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 learn how to make their own hay net feeders.

Registration open from Jan. 6th - Feb. 29th

There will be a *call for papers* for anyone who wants to share a short presentation



Facebook Page

IT IS BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE...

At the 2019 Board Meeting IRKA challenged our fundraising committee to increase our charitable contributions by 10% a year . We did not know how well this community would rise to the occasion!

Between donations from Corks for Conservation sales, the bonfire T-shirt campaign, our online auction, and Horns for Heros funds during the 2019 RKW, IRKA has raised ~\$9,120 this year. With this in mind, we reached out to CeCe Sieffert at IRF to see what we would be able to contribute towards.



"Indonesia is experiencing an unusually long dry season and poachers have been known to set fires to drive animals out of the forests and to distract rangers. Park staff and even off-duty RPU's responded quickly and did everything they could to prevent this fast-moving fire's spread. We commend their bravery."

[Learn more from IRF](#)



The IRF-supported forest restoration project in Way Kambas National Park has suffered a setback due to fire. This is one of their newest projects in Indonesia, started in late 2018. They are growing, planting, and maintaining rhino and elephant food plants in a part of the park formerly clear-cut by encroachers, in the hopes that wildlife will return to this area. IRKA's contribution to this effort will be to assist with the habitat restoration project as well as a soon-to-launch rhino plant nursery for browse. Once they increase the captive population at the SRS they will be in need of that browse supply.

This donation is only possible because of the dedication of our membership to supporting rhinos and conservation!!

Thank You



Sumatran Rhinos in Crisis



With fewer than 80 remaining, Sumatran rhinos are in very real danger of becoming extinct soon if we don't intervene in a big way. Under the guidance of the government of Indonesia's emergency action plan, an alliance of international conservation organizations, including IRF, has launched Sumatran Rhino Rescue, a huge, multi-stage, multi-year undertaking to save the Sumatran rhino. We plan to consolidate the widely dispersed, fragmented wild populations into managed breeding facilities, like the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary.

Rhinos will be bred in captivity and eventually reintroduced into protected areas in the wild. In this blog series, we will explain each step of the program in detail and give examples of how past experiences around the world will help guide the implementation of this plan.

Step 1 includes conducting surveys so we can determine the locations of isolated rhinos, developing plans for, and then implementing captures using pit traps. Once we have a rhino in a crate, where is it going and how does it get there?

TRANSLOCATE:

Regardless of which species of rhino or what part of the world you're working in, the decisions and logistics surrounding the translocation process need to be well planned-out ahead of time. The security of the rhino is a top priority and influences every step of the translocation process. The rhino's final destination will dictate the details of how it's translocated and whether there will be any stops along the way. With the end goal in mind, this article will work backwards from Permanent Home to Temporary Holding to Moving.

Permanent Home

In many cases, translocations are a wild-to-wild situation where animals are moved to either release overcapacity at one site, or to move a population to a safer area less prone to poaching. Several factors are considered when selecting a permanent home for a rhino or group of rhinos and often involves preparing the selected location—especially when there haven't been rhinos there for a while.

One example of this is the recent rhino translocations in India. Through the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 program, IRF partnered with local and international conservation organizations to address the threats facing greater one-horned rhinos. In this case, rhino populations in Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary and Kaziranga National Park had become overcrowded, which was causing territorial disputes between rhinos and stresses on the available resources. To relieve these pressures, it was decided to translocate several rhinos and re-establish a population in Manas National Park. Manas NP is home to the tiger, pygmy hog and golden langur, as well as elephants, wild buffalo and Indian bison. Rhinos were once common in the park, but violent civil conflict beginning in 1989 caused massive damage to the park's infrastructure, including destruction of anti-poaching camps, roads and villages. Until recently, the last rhino seen in Manas was in 1996 and in order to prepare it for rhinos, IRF and our partners rebuilt the park's anti-poaching camps, repaired roads and bridges and also hired, trained and equipped guards from the

local communities. Since these translocations began in 2008, there have been 13 greater one-horned rhino calves born in Manas NP, making a total of 38 rhinos where there once were none.

Temporary Holding

Depending on the circumstances of the particular translocation, the rhino or group of rhinos may need to temporarily be kept at a holding facility before moving-on to their ultimate destination. Often, these temporary enclosures or “bomas” are created in or near the chosen permanent home. The bomas are meant to provide a secure area where the rhino can rest and acclimate to the new environment before being released. While staying in a boma, trained specialists have the opportunity to monitor the animals, ensure they have acclimated and are healthy enough to be released into the park. Once released, they will be continually monitored, but from a farther distance.

Moving

The first stop for each rhino’s translocation will be decided long before any capture attempt is made. So once the rhino is in the crate– what’s next? First, the crate needs to be lifted and placed on the back of a flat-bed truck with heavy machinery.

This is where crate design plays a key-role. Moving crates need to be built strong enough to hold a rhino, while also providing ventilation to keep the animal cool, ports to keep the animal hydrated and an easy access for veterinarians. It’s also very important that the crate is just the right size for the rhino being translocated. Too small will make the trip uncomfortable, too large increases the chances of the rhino hurting itself. The perfect fit is especially important to balance the weight of the crate when being loaded onto the truck — if the rhino is able to shift around too much it is putting itself and the people on the ground in danger!

Once the crate is secured to the truck, the truck will either drive the rhino to its destination, or in some cases, may drive it to the airport so that the crate can be put on a cargo plane– like when Sumatran rhino Harapan was translocated 10,000 miles from the US to Indonesia! The longer the distance traveled, the more risks involved, so every option needs to be carefully weighed before planning a long translocation. Security for the rhino also needs to be considered during the whole journey– the transport convoy is often escorted by rangers or police to ensure there are no poaching attempts and to ensure the transport team has a clear road ahead, free from traffic and unnecessary noises.



Carefully loading rhino crates, South Africa.

Greater one-horned rhinos being released into Manas NP.



A Different Capture Method for Sumatran Rhinos

Translocations are vital to the plan to save the Sumatran rhino, so that they can be managed in a conservation breeding program to ensure they can rebuild their population as quickly as possible. For now, rhinos captured in this program will be translocated the Sumatran rhino facility nearest to them- with the possibility of moving between the facilities in the future. There are currently two Sumatran rhino facilities in Indonesia– one on Indonesian Borneo

and the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) in Way Kambas National Park. There are also plans to construct a third Sumatran rhino facility in northern Sumatra, in the Gunung Leuser ecosystem.

The SRS is currently at capacity with seven rhinos, but an expansion project is underway and will be completed later this year. This will enable the facility to hold up to five more rhinos. Rhinos found and captured in either Way Kambas or nearby Bukit Barisan Selatan National Parks will more than likely be translocated to the SRS and incorporated into the conservation breeding program.

[Congratulations Dr. Susie Ellis](#)

IRF's Executive Director, Dr. Susie Ellis, was recently honored as the 2019 Ulysses S. Seal Award Winner for Innovation in Conservation. This prestigious award from IUCN's Conservation Specialist Planning Group honors Susie's former boss at CSPG, Ulie Seal, and is given every other year to acknowledge and celebrate a scientist who has effectively applied science to solve some of the world's greatest conservation problems. Dr. Ellis has been a leader in conservation projects for species all over the world from turtles to cheetahs, orcas to – of course – rhinos. She is the IUCN Red List Authority for the Asian Rhino Specialist Group and an integral member of IUCN's Conservation Breeding, Penguin, and African Rhino Specialist Groups. Her steadfast dedication and determination have made such an incredible difference for the world's rhinos, and for that, we are incredibly grateful to have her leading Team Rhino.



We could not be prouder – a well-deserved congratulations, Susie!

Saying Goodbye to a Cherished Friend

Dear IRF partners, supporters, and friends,

I am writing you today to share the news that after 13 years of service, Dr. Susie Ellis will be retiring from her position as executive director of the International Rhino Foundation in February 2020.

Susie's accomplishments in wildlife conservation are far too numerous to list. She was instrumental in doubling the size and scope of the organization and expanding our field conservation programs in Africa and Asia. She is an active member of the IUCN Conservation Breeding, Penguin, African Rhino, and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups and is the Red List Authority for the latter. She was recently awarded the Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation.

One of her favorite IRF memories occurred in the wee morning hours of June 23, 2012 at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas National Park, Indonesia. That was the morning Andatu was born, the first Sumatran rhino born in captivity in Indonesia.

IRF will always remain indebted to her work.

Susie will begin transitioning from her duties as executive director on December 1, 2019 to focus on her family. I am pleased to announce that, during the interim, CeCe Sieffert, IRF's deputy director, will assume duties as acting executive director of IRF.

The board of directors has formed a search committee and has retained the firm of Isaacson Miller to lead the search for IRF's new executive director. We hope to fill the position by the end of February 2020.

In addition, Susie will continue to work with IRF as a consultant after her retirement. On behalf of the board, I would like to thank IRF's staff for their hard work and dedication to IRF's mission to ensure the survival of rhinos through strategic partnerships, targeted protection, and scientifically-sound interventions.

Please join me in thanking Susie for all her contributions to wildlife conservation and her passionate service to IRF.

Kind regards,

John Lukas
President, Board of Directors
International Rhino Foundation

Did you know the IRKA has a blog?!!

We have recently added a blog spot on our website. **Stay up-to-date** with the latest news from all our members, including special births, professional development opportunities, workshop details and more.

Sign up below to follow our blog!

BLOG

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. If you are unsure when you need to renew, please contact: [Membership](#)



**JANUARY ENROLLMENT IS OPEN SOON!!
THOSE DUE WILL GET AN EMAIL REMINDER**

[Visit our website](#)

Correspondences

Births:

Lion Country Safari--- Male white rhino "**Bash**"
The Wilds---Female white rhino "**Scout**"
San Diego Safari Park --- Female white "**Future**" 2nd birth from AI and induced ovulation
The Wilds---Female white rhino "**Bing**"

Deaths:

Monarto Safari Park--- 11 month old "**Imani**" white rhino

Transfers:

Tanganyika Wildlife Park --- Male black rhino "**Dubya**" from Chehaw Park
Port Lympne --- 1st ever white rhino "**Zuko**" from Dublin

New Habitat:

Potawatomi Zoo---- New white rhino exhibit received "**Masamba**" from San Diego Safari Park

New Members

Kelsey Hall _____ Disney's Animal Kingdom
Kimberly Hernandez _____ Potter's Park Zoo
Amy Pierce _____ Potter's Park Zoo
Murphy Swartz _____ Potter's Park Zoo
Taylor Woods _____ Henry Villas Zoo
Sydney Hollasch _____ Buffalo Zoo



[New/Renewing Conservation Partners](#)

*Thank
you!*

Cincinnati Zoo _____ Silver
Potter's Park Zoo _____ Silver
Fossil Rim Wildlife Center _____ Gold

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](#)

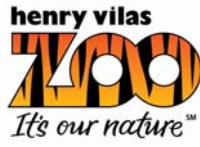
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