

# IUCN SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group



Bibhab Kumar Talukdar

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NAME: RED LIST AUTHORITY CO-ORDINATOR	Susie Ellis, Ph.D.
LOCATION / AFFILIATION	Aaranyak ( <a href="http://www.aaranyak.org">www.aaranyak.org</a> ) and International Rhino Foundation ( <a href="http://www.rhinos.org">www.rhinos.org</a> )
NUMBER OF MEMBERS	63

## MISSION STATEMENT

To foster conservation and management of three species of Asian rhinos and their habitats.

## SUMMARY OF MAIN ACTIVITIES 2015

In February 2015, the Asian Rhino Specialist Group (AsRSG) in association with the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG), International Rhino Foundations and other conservation agencies involved with rhino conservation in Asia conducted Population and Habitat Viability Assessments (PHVAs) for Critically Endangered Javan and Sumatran rhinos which was held in Indonesia. The report containing these two PHVAs is available online on the CBSG website. The report of Indian Rhino Vision 2020 Population Modeling Workshop has also been published and is available online. These documents highlight the threats faced by the Greater One-Horned Rhino, Javan Rhino and Sumatran Rhino in their wild habitats and the possible future of these three species of Asian rhinos under various scenarios in order to assist management and initiate appropriate time bound plan to secure the future of all the three species of Asian rhinos in their wild habitats.

On 4-5 November 2015, the AsRSG in association with the West Bengal Forest Department organised a two-day meeting in Jaldapara National Park, West Bengal, India, with the purpose of finding (and securing) new sites to absorb the increasing rhino population in India and Nepal.

The AsRSG facilitated a two day workshop to review the population data of the Critically Endangered Sumatran Rhino in Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park on 26-27 January 2016 with key stake holders engaged in research, monitoring and protection in order to determine the minimum number of Sumatran Rhino found in the park. The Chair of AsRSG coordinated the workshop where researchers and conservationists from WWF-Indonesia, WCS-Indonesia, Yayasan Badak Indonesia (YABI), International Rhino Foundation and officials from the Bukit Barisan Selatan NP were also present. Based on foot print data analysed from these 11 locations in Bukit Barisan Selatan NP, all participants agreed that the minimum number of Sumatran Rhino population in Bukit Barisan Selatan NP in 2013 was 17 individuals (including at least three calves).

## IMPACT ON CONSERVATION

AsRSG has been monitoring the current state of three species of Asian rhinos through its network of members. In past years, although the conservation status of Greater One-Horned Rhino has increased, and the population of Javan Rhino in Indonesia has marginally increased, concern remains with the declining trend of Sumatran Rhinos. The PHVA workshop organised in February 2015 in Indonesia with the CBSG and International Rhino Foundation, WWF, WCS, YABI etc has flagged some key scenarios on future of Sumatran Rhinos and the modeling results revealed, for the foreseeable future, the viability of all remaining rhino populations will depend on complete protection from poaching. Even with this in place, populations numbering 15 or fewer are at risk to demographic, environmental and genetic uncertainty and would be expected to benefit from consolidation. For populations numbering between 15 and 40, ability to persist will be closely tied to the ability to grow, which is expected to hinge on female reproductive performance. Factors affecting this need to be better understood, monitored and managed until consistent growth is secured. Populations of 40 or more are expected to show greater resilience over the time period considered, but only in the absence of human-mediated threats. Even with consolidation at the three sites, further expansion in numbers will be needed over time, coupled with low-intensity metapopulation management, to moderate the longer-term issues of genetic deterioration and environmental change.

AsRSG are also working closely with AfRSG and TRAFFIC to prepare the necessary reports for CITES, COPs and CITES Standing committee on matters related to illegal trade on rhinos.

## FUTURE GOALS & ACTIVITIES

In coming years, AsRSG aims to speed up its efforts to secure the future of Critically Endangered Sumatran Rhinos in Indonesia through partnership and advocacy with conservation agencies including the Indonesian Government as the Sumatran Rhino is currently restricted to Indonesia although a few small isolated populations may still exist in some forests in South and South East Asia. Further, a young band of budding rhino researchers and conservationists shall be inducted as new members of AsRSG to build future leaders in the field of conservation of the three species of Asian rhino.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Vulnerable Greater One-horned Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) © Bibhab Kumar Talukdar