



Zoo Partners Program



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2015 Autumn Report – Asia Programs

Indian Rhino Vision 2020



Photo: WWF-India

Good news from Assam's Manas National Park – in mid-July, a translocated female gave birth to the program's 11th rhino calf! This calf is the last surviving offspring of rhino #2, one of the first rhinos translocated to the park, and the last of the program's breeding males. Poachers killed rhino #2 last year. The ongoing political insurgency movement, credited with the last two poaching losses, led the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (IRV 2020) partners to hold off moving any other animals to the park until security issues are resolved.

The report from the IRV 2020 Population Modeling Workshop held in November 2014, convened by the Government of Assam, the IRF, WWF, the IUCN Conservation Breeding Specialist and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups, will shortly be available for download from the IRF website. The workshop was developed to review progress with IRV 2020 translocations to-date (a) discussing and determining the real numbers needed for the long-term success of the IRV 2020, taking into account the Manas poaching losses; (b) modeling predicted population growth rates and the numbers of rhinos needed to make the translocations successful; and (c) discussing ways to deal with known threats as well as unforeseen events. The workshop focused primarily on Manas National Park and the next reintroduction site, the Laokhowa-Burachapori complex, but other areas also were discussed and modeled.

The next translocations are planned for later this year; at least six greater one-horned rhinos from Kaziranga National Park will be moved to Laokhowa-Burachapori. Preparations are well underway for these moves - we'll keep you posted as the details for the translocations are finalized.

IRF India Intelligence Specialist Report, Quarters 1-3

For the past 5 years, the IRF has discreetly employed an Intelligence Specialist in India, who operates across Assam. His remit is to develop intelligence networks focusing in the IRV 2020 investment areas, primarily Manas

National Park and the Burachapori-Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuaries, the site for the next translocations. Below are highlights from this year's Quarterly reports.

Quarter 1. The intensity of rhino poaching peaked in the last quarter of 2014 and unfortunately continued in the first three months of 2015 with toll of ten rhinos (from Kaziranga National Park). Though this is tragic, it is less than the beginning of 2014 when 13 rhinos were slaughtered. In 2013, 17 rhinos were lost.

The year began with apprehension of a surrendered United Kukigram Defence Army (UKDA) militant who had taken up rhino poaching during the past few years. Our Intelligence Specialist, through his network, obtained access to a camera trap image of the poacher in action inside the Kaziranga National Park. The park authorities, despite having the photograph, could not initiate any investigations and instead suppressed the incident for reasons better known to them. Rahul shared the same with Karbi Anglong police in complete secrecy back in June 2014. The person was identified through the police profile dossiers; however, he was not traced until early January 2015. The poacher was arrested and admitted he had poached two rhinos in 2014. He was then taken to Kaziranga for a scene-of-crime detection, which matched evidence from the two poaching incidences.

As the *modus operandi* of poaching changes, approach of investigations also has to change. It is no longer a direct battle of enforcement vs. crime. Indirect methods also need to be applied and to do so our Intelligence Specialist, in consultation with the Karbi Anglong police, met with the local *Kuki* tribes with that of the poachers' *Paite* tribe from Manipur at the Manja Police Station. Invited were all social, surrendered, and over-ground militant groups of Karbi Anglong District to make them aware of rhino conservation and benefits of saving wildlife. They were requested not to harbor poachers from adjoining states of Manipur and Nagaland who come with vested interests but leave a bad name for the local community. The result was a resolute commitment from the groups to provide information to stop wildlife crime. The idea behind such meeting was not only to garner support but also to send a message to poachers that free access to the remote village routes and local support might be a bit more difficult and the locals may even hand them over to the police

Quarter 2. Only two rhinos were poached from April – June; this improvement can be attributed to the hard work of our Specialist and his colleagues. For the same quarter in 2014 and 2013, six rhinos each were lost. However, one concern still remains that out of the 12 rhinos poached during the first 6 months, 10 were poached inside Kaziranga, which historically has been the hardest-hit rhino-bearing area.

There has been an improvement in political will with the new forest minister in place. There has been a sincere cohesive effort by the Forest Department as well as the Special Task Force of the Police Department that has sent some strong signals to Manipur that has somewhat unnerved the parties behind the region's rhino horn trade.

One of the most noteworthy initiatives taken up by the Special Task Force was to serve arrest warrants in the name of the traders (identified by our Intelligence Specialist) to the Manipur Police. Arrest warrants are legal instruments that cannot be ignored for a very long time and the Manipur police at one point or the other had to comply with the legal procedure. We suspect that word of the arrest warrants reached the traders through their communications channels; most seem to have gone underground and reduced their operations.

Along with this, another possible reason that may have also played its part in reduction of poaching is perhaps killing of several Para-military personnel by National Socialist Council of Nagaland – K (NSCN-K, a militant faction that split off from the NSCN in 1988) cadres in Manipur after they decided to withdraw themselves from Naga militant groups in cease fire with the Government of India. The backlash of the attack was severe and has resulted in restriction of movement and frequent frisking and checking of people and property by the armed

forces as well as police all along the international border of Manipur and Myanmar as well as state borders of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur.

Quarter 3. Although much progress can be reported for each quarter, intelligence groundwork often takes time to mature and ‘bear fruit.’ This quarter is filled with good results of the work that was initiated sometime back. Only one rhino poaching in this quarter is certainly an indication of that.

In one such instance, two cases of poaching (one rhino case and one deer poaching case) resulted in convictions of 2 and 7 years respectively in two different districts of Assam. Court cases in general take a long time to come before a judge and in case of wildlife offences; convictions are hard to come by. In these two instances, the judgment came in record time.

One of the cases dates back to 2011, when camera traps inside the Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park with rifles caught two poachers (photo right). Subsequent to the discovery of the photographs one rhino was also killed a few days later. While the poachers absconded, the forest staff led ably by the Deputy Field Officer of Orang investigated the case. Local communities identified the perpetrators and along with increased administrative pressure, caused the poachers to surrender, along with their weapons. The case continued with depositions and cross examinations and suddenly in the second half of April 2015, the case came up for judge’s examination and by July 2015 came the judgment convicting the accused and handed a 2-year year Rigorous Imprisonment and a fine of Rs.25,000 each (about \$385).

The second case of Deer poaching in Nameri National Park in Sonitpur District is perhaps the fastest conviction case. Three deer poachers were arrested in their homes and based on their confession, locally made guns used for poaching were discovered hidden inside the Nameri National Park. The case came up for deposition in November 2014 and then came up for argument only in July 2015 and in the same month the accused were convicted and sentenced to 7 years of Rigorous Imprisonment along with a Rs.50,000 fine each (\$768).



To expand the network of informants, our Intelligence Specialist visited Manas National Park and surrounding areas from where Leopard and Clouded Leopard skin seizures have been reported in the last few months. The cat skin trade has significantly increased and the Indo-Bhutan borders are being used to smuggle out the contraband (Manas shares a border with Bhutan). It is possible that the gang or rhino poachers are continuously ‘oiling’ their system from the money derived from cat skin trade to keep the gang members engaged. Although much time has passed after the last rhino poaching incident in Manas, these gangs are still pursuing illegal trade in wildlife and if caught, the agencies concerned may well be able to implicate them on the rhino poaching.

Sumatran Rhino Conservation

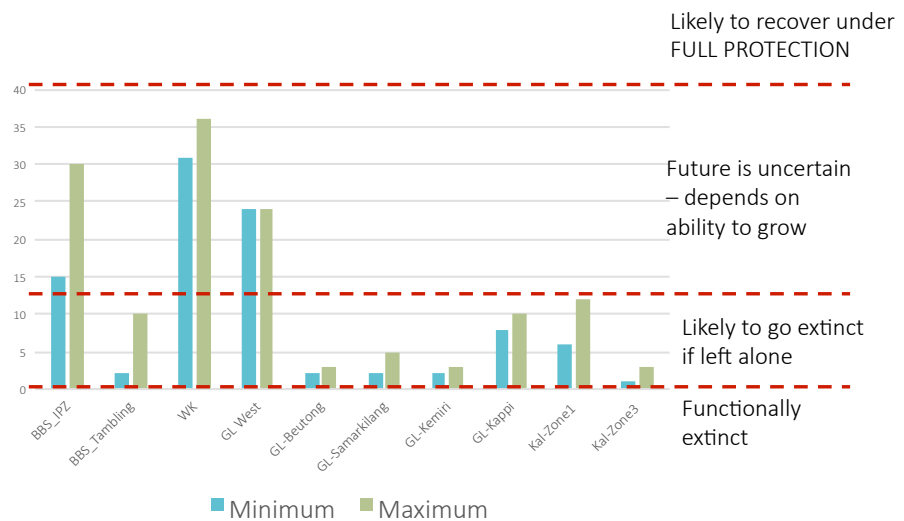
Conservation Planning

In February, funded by a Disney Reverse the Decline grant to the IRF, along with WWF, and the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, IRF and our Indonesian partner Yayasan Badak Indonesia (YABI) convened a small group of experts for a Sumatran Rhino Population Viability Assessment workshop, facilitated by the IUCN Conservation Breeding Specialist Group. The preliminary questions explored, given our best estimates of Sumatran rhino biology and the threats in their environment were:

- how viable do we think remaining populations are?
- which threats do we most need to manage?
- how successful do we have to be?
- what management strategies are likely to be most successful?

Sumatran rhinos now are found in only four wild sites (Gunung Leuser, Way Kambas, and Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park), and in central Kalimantan. Population estimates range from 94 -138 animals, with the best guess estimate being roughly 112 animals. These are found in at least ten subpopulations containing 2-50 rhinos each. Additionally, there are five captive rhinos (5 at the SRS, 1 at the Cincinnati Zoo¹, and 3 non-reproductive animals in Sabah, Malaysia). The Sumatran rhino was recently declared extinct in the wild in Malaysia.

Results of the VORTEX modeling conducted at the workshop showed that growing populations of less than 15 and populations without growth of less than 40 show a 1 in 20 or greater likelihood of extinction over 100 years even in absence of human-mediated threats. The figure right shows the various population numbers and delineates the likelihood of recovery. The blue bars indicate the lower end of the population estimates with the green bar representing the highest population estimates.



These results point to the immediate need to enhance protection for the larger populations while at the same time consolidating populations (e.g., moving animals from the smaller populations to the larger ones) or moving reproductively viable animals into the managed breeding program at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary. This will be an enormous task, but we believe these actions hold the best chance for the species' survival. The report from the workshop will be available online soon.

¹ Harapan, the last Sumatran rhino in the US, will be moving to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in early November.

Two additional strategic planning sessions, funded by the Disney Reverse the Decline grant, were also conducted in March. These exercises brought together not only rhino experts from around the globe but also the wide range of stakeholders necessary for the species recovery plan to succeed. These sessions identified a number of critical actions, including:

- continuing existing protection
- developing Intensive Protection Zones (i.e., no-go zones) within the park, which are heavily guarded and monitored.
- consolidating smaller populations either into larger ones or moving them (if reproductively viable) to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary
- expanding the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary so that it can accommodate more animals
- developing a communications strategy to build Sumatran rhino champions in Indonesia and globally
- working closely with local communities so that they benefit economically from the presence and protection of rhinos

Sumatran Rhino Funding

In our last Zoo Partners Update, we reported that IRF, along with WWF and Conservation International, was instrumental in securing approval of an \$11.2 million Debt-for-Nature Swap amendment to help save Sumatran rhinos under the U.S. Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA). The objectives of this new funding are to continue and enhance the conservation of tropical forests, focusing on key areas for Sumatran rhinos and tigers. Matching funds totaling \$ 560,000 were required to secure the TFCA funding (roughly a 1:20 return on investment). The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden generously contributed \$50,00 of these match funds. The \$11.2 million will be used to support strengthening institutions responsible for national park management and forest conservation, improved management and governance of key protected areas, including engaging all key stakeholders, protection and management of Sumatran rhinos, tigers, and orangutans along with other threatened species, and increasing the awareness of local people and governments.



The TFCA funds are ready to be released this fall: YABI has submitted their proposal for a portion of funds for Way Kambas; WCS is taking the lead on the proposal for Bukit Barisan Selatan (BBS), and the Leuser International Foundation for Gunung Leuser. The \$11.2 million will be shared among the three organizations and the three parks. The German government also is providing a 7 m Euro grant to WCS for Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park – Our partner Yayasan Badak Indonesia's (YABI) role will primarily focus on protection in an Intensive Protection Zone to be created in the park.

Rhino Protection Units (RPU)

The RPU program celebrated its 20th anniversary this summer. Through our on-the-ground partner, Yayasan Badak Indonesia, IRF employs Sumatran RPUs in Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park (7 units; est. 40-50 rhinos)

and Way Kambas National Park (5 units; est. 35 rhinos), all with strong support from IRF Zoo Partners, most notably the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK), the Cincinnati Zoo, Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, the International Rhino Keeper’s Association, Los Angeles Zoo and others.

The Jacksonville Zoo has ‘adopted’ an RPU in Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park (photo right), fully funding all their costs for salaries and operations. The teams proudly wear the Zoo’s logo on their uniforms. Each RPU costs roughly \$40,000 per year – perhaps your zoo might consider following Jacksonville’s model and adopting an RPU?



The RPUs continue to patrol and survey several thousand kilometers per year in each national park, both on foot and by boat, all the while monitoring rhino, tiger, elephant and tapir populations through direct sightings, footprints, feces, wallows, and evidence of feeding. RPUs also gather evidence of illegal activities, including encroachment to build hunting camps and plant cash crops, setting snares for large and small mammals, laying traps for birds, illegal fishing, logging, the collection of non-timber forest products, and setting fires to burn off old vegetation and create fresh browse for game animals such as sambar deer.

AAZK Bowling for Rhinos Trip to Indonesia

As is our tradition, the IRF hosts two of the top four winners from the American Association of Zookeepers Bowling for Rhinos initiative on a trip to Indonesia each year. From July 30 through August 10, the IRF hosted two AAZK Bowling for Rhinos winners on a 12-day trip to Indonesia: Teresa Randall and Robbie Clark (San Diego Zoo). Dr. Susie Ellis led the group, which visited Way Kambas (and the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary), Bukit Barisan Selatan, and Ujung Kulon National Parks.



Photo above upper L-R clockwise – Robbie Clark (San Diego Zoo), Rosa the Sumatran Rhino (SRS), Susie Ellis (IRF), Tamara Lookabaugh (an educator from Oklahoma City), Teresa Randall (Oklahoma City Zoo), Marisa Elizalde (Lincoln Park Zoo), Chad Harmon (Disney’s Animal Kingdom and founder of the Horns and Heroes art project that benefits IRF), Jill Harmon (Disney’s Animal Kingdom).

Javan Rhino Conservation

Indonesia’s Ujung Kulon National Park is bordered by water to the north, west and south (map right). Its eastern boundary adjoins agricultural lands of Banten Province, one of Indonesia’s most heavily populated regions. Thus, there is continuous pressure on its tropical forest habitat and wildlife. Human encroachment, necessitated the removal of illegal settlements from the national park by government authorities several years ago, however, a low level of illegal activities (e.g., fishing, bird-trapping, small-scale timber extraction, forest product gathering) still occur.



Monitoring Javan Rhinos

New hope for Javan rhinos is reflected in recent video footage of a young Javan rhino calf caught on video by the Ujung Kulon National Park authority https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=30&v=H_4ZWmDaMmU. Two years ago, IRF and WWF donated 140 video camera traps to the park, which at that time was only partially covered by camera traps. The new cameras

allowed the Ujung Kulon team to set camera in grids throughout the entire park. The most recent data, verified by the IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group, show that there are between 57 and 61 animals (three of them were difficult to tell apart). Ujung Kulon documented three new calves recently, including the one in the video mentioned above, bringing the minimum number of Javan rhinos to 60.

In February this year, the IRF, YABI, WWF, the IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group, and the Government of Indonesia convened a Javan Rhino Population and Habitat Viability Assessment workshop. Affiliated by the IUCN Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, the participants identified a number of key actions to recover the species. The report will be finalized over the next month and posted to the CBSG as well as the IRF website.



Photo © Stephen Belcher

Several key actions are needed immediately, including ramping up protection. Currently, YABI operates four Rhino Protection Units (RPUs) in the 254-acre (1,026 square km) UKNP. Each four-man unit spends between 15-20 days in the field each month, monitoring threatened wildlife, de-activating traps and snares, identifying and apprehending illegal intruders (including poachers and encroachers), and investigating crime scenes, thus preventing or reducing the loss of wildlife. We plan to add a fifth RPU in 2015.

Prospects for Javan rhino population growth also are linked to habitat restoration efforts focusing on the removal of an invasive palm species (*Arenga obtusifolia*). Presently, only about 40% of Ujung Kulon National Park is considered suitable habitat for Javan rhinos because of this species. YABI is authorized to remove the pesky species only in the JRSCA in the eastern portion of the park; we are now working to secure permission from the Indonesian government to remove the palm from other areas.

Since the project's inception, 78 hectares of the invasive *Arenga* palm have been cleared, removing a canopy species that inhibits vegetative growth on the forest floor and allowing native rhino food plants to recolonize. To date, more than 150 people from surrounding communities have been hired to cut-and-clear the palms, as well as construct a perimeter fence to prevent encroachment, and to build three guard posts as well as a base camp for the RPU force. With just a small area cleared, we have seen remarkable results - the number of Javan rhinos that now use JRSCA habitat has increased from two to nine individuals. We will continue to seek funding to continue *Arenga* removal in other areas of the park so that rhino-friendly habitat can increase.

An assessment of potential translocations sites has just been completed, with the report in progress. The JRSCA area is intended to be the launch site for moving a subset of the population to a new site, so that the "eggs are not all in one basket."

Zoo Partner Fundraising Events and Programs

We are humbled by all that our Zoo Partners do to enable their growing support for rhino conservation. This funding represented almost one-third of IRF revenue in 2014. Zoo Partners support the IRF through a variety of events and activities, including Quarters for Conservation, conservation grants and other fundraisers. Many American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) chapters participate in annual Bowling for Rhinos events, while the International Rhino Keeper Association (IRKA) publishes a calendar and hosts Cinco de Rhino celebrations; both groups donate the the proceeds to rhino conservation. And more and more zoos and aquariums are hosting special Cinco de Rhino and World Rhino Day events that raise both awareness and much-needed funding.

If your institution hasn't yet contributed to rhino conservation in 2015, please consider using the form on the last page of this report to do so.

IRF 2014 Annual Report

IRF's 2014 Annual Report is now available in hard copy or online (beginning tomorrow) at www.rhinos.org/annual-reports/2014-annual-report/. If you have not received a hard copy and would like one, please email Alex Hausler (a.hausler@rhinos.org).

**We're proud of being lean.
93% of your contribution goes directly to field programs.**

2015 Zoo Partner Support - 1 January through 30 September 2015

| | |
|--|---|
| Akron Zoological Foundation | Knowlsey Safari Park |
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| Brevard Zoo | Maryland Zoological Society |
| Buffalo Zoo | Milwaukee County Zoo |
| CERZA Zoo Conservation | Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong |
| Chester Zoo | Opel Zoo |
| Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden | Oregon Zoo |
| Columbus Zoological Park Association | Potter Park Zoo |
| Dallas Zoo Management | Reid Park Zoological Society |
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| International Rhino Keeper Association | Zoo Miami |
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Thank you!



Zoo Partners Membership Form

Contact _____ Zoo _____

Position _____ E-mail _____

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Rhino Conservation Grant

___ \$10,000 ___ \$5,000 ___ \$2,500 ___ \$1,000 Other (amount) _____

We encourage your institution to give an unrestricted gift so that we can put funds to work where they are needed most. If your zoo wishes to restrict its support to a particular project (or projects), please enter the name(s) from the list below:

Operation: Stop Poaching Now (southern Africa)
Zimbabwe's Lowveld Rhino Trust
Botswana Black Rhino Reintroduction
Indian Rhino Vision 2020
Indonesian Rhino Protection Units
Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary
Javan Rhino Study and Conservation Area

For additional information regarding IRF programs or support opportunities, please contact:

Susie Ellis (s.ellis@rhinos.org) or Alex Hausler (a.hausler@rhinos.org).

Membership Forms and Rhino Conservation Grants can be mailed to:

International Rhino Foundation
201 Main Street, Suite 2600
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

www.rhinos.org