

SAVING A SPECIES:

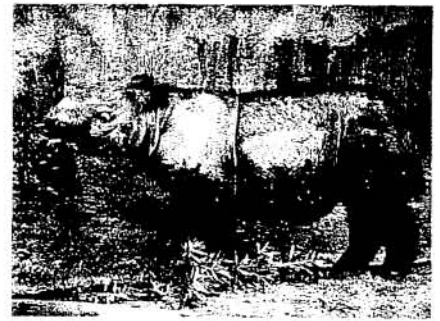


The Sumatran Rhino Trust

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HAT IS A SUMATRAN RHINO?

The Sumatran or Asian hairy rhino is the smallest and most primitive of the five rhino species. It is thought to be related to the prehistoric and long-extinct woolly rhino. Adult Sumatran rhinos stand four to four-and-a-half feet tall at the shoulder and weigh between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds. Unlike the other two Asian species, the Sumatran rhino has two horns; the Indian and the Javan rhinos have single horns.



WHERE DOES IT LIVE?

Despite its name, the Sumatran rhino is not restricted to the large Indonesian island of Sumatra. In the last century, the species ranged from India's Himalayan foothills throughout Southeast Asia. Today it survives in mostly small and often isolated pockets on Sumatra, Borneo and the Malaysian peninsula. The total wild population is thought to be about 800 animals, and Sumatra appears to have the largest number. Unfortunately, the entire population is declining at a rapid rate.

IS THE SUMATRAN RHINO ENDANGERED?

Yes! In 1984 the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) declared the Sumatran rhino to be one of the 12 most endangered species in the world. Poaching probably has been the greatest threat to the rhino's survival. Like its other Asian and African relatives, the endangered Sumatran rhino is protected by law. Man, the ultimate predator, however, continues to kill. People in some regions of Asia will pay thousands of dollars for a single rhino horn, which is thought to be valuable in folk medicines and, to a lesser extent, as an aphrodisiac. For local people living near rhinos, the money offered for a few horns is likely to be more than many of them can earn from a lifetime of hard work. It's difficult for them to pass up such offers of money when they, too, are struggling to survive.

An even more insidious and, in some ways, crueller threat to the Sumatran rhino is the destruction of its natural habitat. Every year, thousands of acres of tropical rain forest are being cleared in Indonesia and Malaysia by loggers and farmers. The Sumatran rhino, which depends heavily on its tropical rain forest habitat for survival, is being crowded into smaller and smaller areas. In most cases, these pockets in which the rhinos "survive" are difficult to protect because they exist in great number and are often widely separated. Skilled poachers are likely to find rhinos easier to locate and kill in these areas. Consequently, few rhinos can survive, and most of these sites cannot maintain anything close to a viable population of rhinos for long.

▲ Mahatu, an adult female, first arrived in the United States in 1988. Her death in May of 1992 was a sad loss for the Sumatran Rhino Trust and those who knew her.

◀ Em, approximately one-and-a-half years old, is thought to have lost her mother to poachers. She arrived at the Los Angeles Zoo last November.

B Y J A M E S G . D O H E R T Y



NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY/ILLUMINEM

To accommodate the rhinos, Rapunzel has both indoor and outdoor exhibits at the Bronx Zoo.

Of the two Sumatran rhinos at the San Diego Zoo, Barakas Kumu (pictured here) is the more vocal.

Sumatran rhinos in U.S. collections and six in Indonesian collections. A second male was caught recently and is waiting for transport to San Diego.

The captive-breeding program of the SRT, however, is not the complete answer to the survival problems of the Sumatran rhino. Little is known about the nature of this rather shy species both in captivity and in the wild. Studies of Sumatran rhinos are needed as well as better protection for the existing wild populations.

The SRT provides financial support for rhino conservation in Indonesia, but more funds are needed to cope with pressures from poachers, farmers and loggers. All this comes at a time when the SRT participants in the United States (the Bronx Zoo, the Cincinnati Zoo, the Los Angeles Zoo, and the San Diego Zoo) are involved in many other equally important wildlife conservation projects, all of which require considerable financial support as well as high levels of staff involvement.

Saving the Sumatran rhino from extinction requires the participation of zoos and governments, as well as support from the public. With these kinds of commitment, however, it can be done...and it will! □

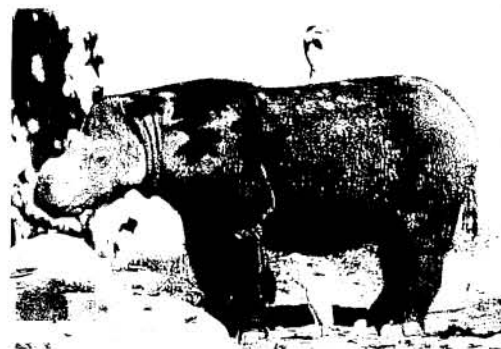
James G. Doherty is General Curator at the Bronx Zoo. In 1990 he was appointed species coordinator and project manager of the Sumatran Rhino Trust.

WHAT IS THE SUMATRAN RHINO TRUST AND WHAT ARE ITS GOALS?

In 1984 the Bronx, Cincinnati, Los Angeles and San Diego zoos joined forces in a unique international effort to work with the Indonesian government to help protect the Sumatran rhino from extinction through captive breeding. Known as the Sumatran Rhino Trust (SRT), this cooperative project between the four American zoos and the government of Indonesia was fashioned to rescue rhinos from regions where they couldn't be protected. The zoos engaged a well-known conservationist with many years of trapping experience to survey the forests for rhinos and to set up traps where there were dependable signs of rhinos. A trained crew of Indonesians helps conduct surveys and checks the traps daily. When a rhino is captured, it is moved out of the trap via cleared trails to a special holding facility where it is gradually introduced to a captive diet of hay, grain and leaves.

The goal of the SRT is to establish breeding pairs (or groups) of Sumatran rhinos in the four American zoos and in Indonesian zoos. These captive populations are intended to be safeguards against the disappearance of this highly endangered species in the wild. The SRT hopes that eventually these breeding groups will provide captive-bred rhinos for release into protected forested tracts capable of supporting reasonably sized rhino populations.

To date, the SRT has successfully rescued and transported rhinos to zoological parks in the United States and Indonesia. At the present time, there are five



SAN DIEGO ZOO/ION GARRISON

SUMATRAN RHINOS IN AMERICA



CINCINNATI ZOO/IRON ALTING

Name	Estimated Age	Arrival in U.S.	Sex	Zoo Home
Barakas Kumu	adult	11/25/88	Female	San Diego
Rapunzel	adult	11/29/89	Female	Bronx
Ipuh	adult	4/10/91	Male	Cincinnati
Embam	1-2 years	11/23/91	Female	Los Angeles
Rami	adult	11/23/91	Female	San Diego

(Rhinos are listed according to their arrival dates.)



SAN DIEGO ZOO/IRON ALTING

Ipuh, the only male Sumatran rhino in the country, can be seen at the Cincinnati Zoo.

This female, named Rami, arrived at the San Diego Zoo in November of 1991.