



# THE PLANTER

VOL. 83 NO. 980

NOVEMBER 2007

KKDN PP 820/2/2008  
ISSN 0126-575x



*Sustainable production of palm oil... 715*

*Prize money ...755*

*Financial assessment of Citrus hystrix...719*

*Genetic engineering in oil palm improvement... 729*

*Fighting to save the Sumatran rhinoceros...763*

Published by: ISP Management (M) Sdn. Bhd. No. 29 31 & 33 Jalan Taman U Thant, 55000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.  
e-mail: [isphq@tm.net.my](mailto:isphq@tm.net.my) web site: <http://www.isp.org.my>

Printed by: Percetakan Seasons Sdn. Bhd. 3 Jalan 8/155, Taman Industri Bukit O.U G, Jalan Klang Lama, 58200 Kuala Lumpur.



**SAFETY for Modern Spraying Technology! Be Smart!**

**Use the Correct Pesticides  
for Good Agricultural Practice**

>> more on page 8

---

# Fighting to Save Borneo's Vital Last Remaining Sumatran Rhinoceros with the Support of Palm Oil Plantations

THAYAPARAN, S

*SOS Rhino Borneo, Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation, University Malaysia Sabah, Locked Bag 2073, 88899 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia*

AND

SIMON SIBURAT

*Eco-management Unit, PPB Oil Palms Bhd, Locked Bag 34, 90009 Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysia*

Tabin Wildlife Reserve (TWR) has been described as an "island" because it is surrounded by a sea of oil palm plantations. Tabin Wildlife Reserve is one of the last remaining habitats for the Sumatran rhinoceros in Sabah. Conservationists view the expansion of oil palm plantations in Southeast Asia as one of the greatest threats to the region's forests and wildlife. Palm oil producers are responding by calling for a truce and proposing that conservationists work with palm oil producers to protect particularly important areas of biodiversity.

Borneo, the third biggest island in the world, (Ghazally & Laili, 2001) was once covered with dense rainforests, with swampy coastal areas fringed with mangrove forests and a mountainous interior. Between the period of 1980s and 1990s Borneo Island underwent a remarkable evolution. Its forests were levelled at a rate unparalleled in human history. Borneo's rainforests went to industrialised countries in the form of garden furniture, veneers, plywoods and other building materials. The rapid agriculture expansion, particularly in oil palm cultivation can be a serious threat, if not managed. Unfortunately, today the forests of

Borneo are but a shadow of those of legend.

It is very easy to categorise plantations as the enemy but after living and working with the plantation owners and workers, it is apparent that they can help conserve the critically endangered Sumatran rhinoceros in Tabin Wildlife Reserve. Plantations can provide tight security to block other channels for illegal entries into the reserve. An important conservation initiative by a plantation around Tabin Wildlife Reserve is underway in Sabahmas Plantation, Lahad Datu, a subsidiary of PPB Oil Palms Berhad. Here, the plantation is working closely with SOS Rhino (Borneo) to conserve the critically endangered Sumatran rhinoceros.

## **Tabin Wildlife Reserve and plantations**

Tabin Wildlife Reserve is situated within the Dent Peninsular and covers an area of approximately 120 521 ha. Two-thirds of the reserve is surrounded by oil palm plantations. The major oil palm plantations are FELDA and Borneo Samudra in the East, Golden Crop, Tunku and Permai Plantations in the south; Sabahmas Plantation in the west and Hap Seng

Consolidated in the north. There are also many smaller plantations that share a common boundary with Tabin Wildlife Reserve.

### **SOS Rhino (Borneo) and Sabahmas Plantation**

SOS Rhino is a US-based non-profit foundation that focuses on the conservation of rhinoceros worldwide. SOS Rhino Borneo is a Malaysian-registered NGO working closely with SOS Rhino in the conservation of the rare and critically endangered Sumatran rhinoceros in the Tabin Wildlife Reserve. SOS Rhino Borneo plays a major role in protection and awareness of Sumatran rhinoceros in Tabin Wildlife Reserve.

Sabahmas Plantation is a subsidiary of PPB Oil Palms Berhad. The 10 000 ha plantation is located about 40 km from Lahad Datu and shares the western boundary with Tabin Wildlife Reserve. This common boundary is about 9 km long.

Sabahmas Plantation has been working with SOS Rhino since its inception in 2000. The Plantation's interest started in establishing a conservation area of about 530 ha adjacent to Tabin Wildlife Reserve. This conservation area runs diagonally across the plantation linking the estates riparian reserves along the Segama River to Tabin. This conservation area doubled as a wildlife corridor that allows free movement of wildlife between these two forest areas. When a fauna study was conducted over the area, not less than 38 species of fauna were recorded based on visual counts, foot prints and dung. Among the protected species of mammals encountered were Elephants, Banteng , Orang Utan, Borneon Gibbon and Grey leaf monkey. The presence of these endangered, rare and threatened species has led Sabahmas Plantation to set up a strong security unit to monitor and patrol its western

boundary with Tabin reserve. They are seven honorary game wardens trained by Sabah Wildlife Department to monitor these areas. These honorary game wardens also maintain a strict check on movement into and out of the Plantation which is important to curb poaching. Poachers tend to use the Plantation as a conduit into Tabin.

When SOS Rhino (Borneo) was formed in April 2003, Sabahmas Plantation supported the construction of its base camp along the Segama river. Since then, Sabahmas Plantation has been providing a regular supply of operating materials to SOS Rhino (Borneo) Rhino Protection Units (RPU). The most recent of these is the sale of a highly subsidised used four wheel drive to support the RPU. In addition to this, Sabahmas Plantation has offered assistance on the maintenance of the patrol vehicles and the management has agreed to provide venue for SOS Rhino (Borneo) to conduct training for their field staff in the near future.

### **How plantation owners can help to conserve the critically endangered Sumatran rhinoceros in Tabin Wildlife reserve?**

#### *What are the problems that Sumatran rhinoceros face?*

##### *Habitat loss*

The Sumatran rhinoceros, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* (see cover photo and *Figure 1*) is currently the most critically endangered of all the rhinoceros species in the world. The North Eastern region of the island of Borneo is the last known location where the subspecies of the Bornean subspecies, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis harrissoni*, exists. The Tabin Wildlife Reserve is one of the two areas in Malaysia that harbour populations of the

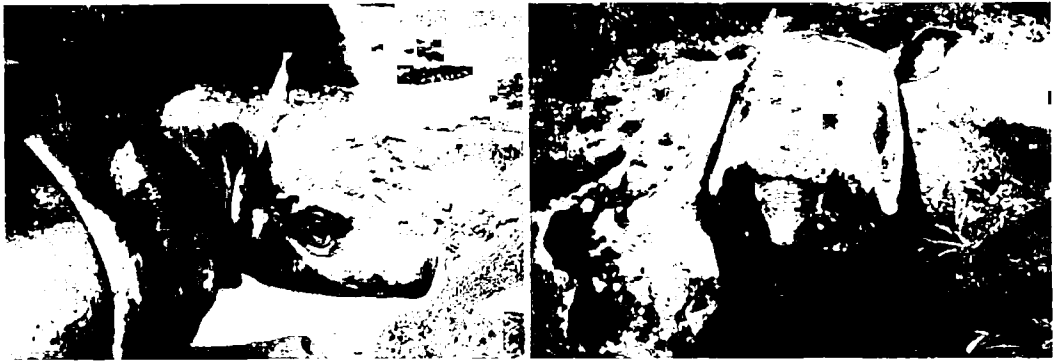


Figure 1 Sepilok captive Sumatran rhinoceros by SOS Rhino Borneo

species.

### *Poaching*

The serious reduction in the population of Sumatran rhinos is caused by its ruthless persecution by indigenous hunters. The practice is caused by the widespread belief in the medical and magical powers of the parts of these animals, especially the horn. Because of the high value of the parts of this species, the world rhinoceros population has declined significantly throughout the years.

### *So what's the answer?*

Surveys and research over the past 25 years regarding the Sumatran rhinoceros in Sabah suggest that the species risks imminent extinction. The rhinoceros issue must be addressed within the next few years or rhinoceros may no longer exist in Malaysia. Efforts to increase its population through captive breeding within Malaysia have been unsuccessful, while international efforts have begun to show results. Malaysia should take advantage of these other efforts.

Poaching may still be a threat to Sabah's rhinoceros, but there are others as well. All observations and logic tell us that a small number of scattered, unknown gendered rhinoceros may limit breeding opportunity. This

could be a significant constraint to population growth and survival. Recommendations from the Fourth Sumatran Rhinoceros Conservation Workshop suggest that the remaining rhinoceros in Tabin Wildlife Reserve be brought close together to increase the chances of successful mating. Selected rhinoceros from throughout Sabah will be captured and brought to a designated area (DA). The purpose of the designated area will be to get as many of its rhinoceros as possible to breed.

To maximise chances of fulfilling the designated area's goal, all sources of funding will be considered, but viable sustainable financing should be established for a long-term commitment.

Malaysia is currently the largest producer and exporter of palm oil in the world. The country produced 15 million tonnes of crude palm oil (CPO) in 2005 compared to 14 million tonnes in 2004 ([http://www.mpoc.org.my/main\\_mktstat\\_export.asp](http://www.mpoc.org.my/main_mktstat_export.asp)). The total export revenue of oil palm products in 2005 was RM28.6 billion. Sumatran rhinoceros conservation design would require collaboration between conservation groups and palm oil plantations, with local oil palm companies using their expertise in running their plantations in an environmentally sound manner, continuing to

monitor entry into their plantations, and contributing funds to further protection of rhino habitat. With sustainable funding, NGOs would continue to assist the government in protecting forests using oil palm revenue contributions and the companies would be able to enhance their corporate image to satisfy the environmentally-conscious consumers: A win-win partnership. We believe that NGOs can participate in such joint ventures without losing their integrity if they go into it with the appropriate level of caution.

Large oil palm plantations with their immense resources can do the following:

- i. Adopt the rhinos in Tabin Wildlife Reserve,
- ii. Adopt the SOS Rhino Borneo Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) rangers,
- iii. To support conservation organisations in terms of funds, materials and

logistics.

- iv. Teach conservation subjects in oil palm plantation training schools,
- v. Establish a conservation department within the plantation,
- vi. Develop a long-term partnership with conservation organisations, and
- vii. Allow areas unsuitable for planting oil palm to regenerate into natural forest, to retain wetland, or develop areas into conservation areas.

## References

- GHAZALLY ISMAIL and LAILI BIN DIN (EDITORS). 2001. *Scientific Journey Through Borneo* Series. Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, East Malaysia.
- MALAYSIAN PALM OIL COUNCIL. 2007. [http://www.mpoc.org.my/main\\_mktstat\\_export.asp](http://www.mpoc.org.my/main_mktstat_export.asp)



### Replanting

Useful tractor-mounted implements for replanting:

- Mulcher/Shredder
- Plant-hole Diggers
- Cambering Graders & Buckets
- Cover Crop Seeders
- Fertiliser Spreaders

Feel free to ask for special brochure or demonstration

HOWARD

Tel: (03)6093 1010

e-mail: [howardmy@tm.net.my](mailto:howardmy@tm.net.my)



Your Key To **Smart Technology**

### **ST-101 AUTOMATIC ARM CIRCLE AND PATH SPRAYER**

*No. 1 best seller in Malaysia for a fully mechanised  
herbicide applicator.*

Tel : 603-5122 5742, 5122 5743 Fax: 603-5122 5741 Website : [www.rbfield.com](http://www.rbfield.com)