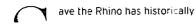


Sumatran rhino numbers revised downwards

Sumatran rhino numbers are going down. A year ago, numbers were estimated at 275-300. However, there are severe doubts over the survival of Sumatran rhinos in Peninsula Malaysia, and it seems more likely that there are only around 200 left, in Sumatra and in Sabah (Malaysia). Although poaching has traditionally been the biggest threat facing them (their smaller horns are considered more potent in Traditional Chinese Medicine and thus demand higher prices), today the problems come from human population increase and the associated increased need for natural resources. This is reducing the amount of rhino habitat left and, even more worryingly, fragmenting it into non-viable "islands" of forest.

Petra Fleischer Fundraising Manager



Laing Foundation, Silver Jungle and the EAZA Rnino Campaign, we have stepped up our support. We have built a strong partnership with the International Rnino Foundation (IRF) and an Indonesian NGO, Yayasan Badak Indonesia (YABI), which run the Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) programme in Sumatra and Java, and our Director and two of our Trustees



Arief Rublanto Coordinator of Intelligence and Law Enforcement Unit (ILEU) of Indonesian Rhino Conservation Program

programme is so successful: the RPUs are incredibly motivated, despite the harsh terrain that they work in and the atmosphere in camp is excellent. No doubt helped by the fantastic cooking, see recipe!) Amongst serious rhino talk, we had plenty of giggles. These guys love what they do, the jobs are far oversubscribed, and there is a genuine interest in the future of the rhinos, even though only about half of the staff have actually encountered a rhino in the wild. (We quickly worked out that our chances of finding one were virtually zero.)

I was equally impressed with how the project uses sophisticated science-based approaches to rhino monitoring; the GIS mapping and block-count results are particularly heipful for identifying key mino areas and hotspots for illegal activities. Yet we still don't know enough about the composition of the rhino populations inhabiting Way Kambas and Bukit Barisan Selation National Parks; their sex and age distribution, breeding performance and health.

The RPUs are keen on the idea of ecotourism, that might generate income for the programme, as well as raise awareness about the species and conservation issues. With the right development, Way Kambas, which contains the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, especially, might be especially suitable for ecotourists.

When chatting to the IRF and YABI about their priorities for the programme, three key requirements popped up time-after-time:

- Keeping the on-going protection activities running. In the past 12 months, 124 illegal activities were encountered in the NPs
- The need to set camera traps in the NPs in order to catch images of the mysterious creatures and build up a picture of the populations. The cameras will also be able to gather.

- information on their leeding and wallowing behaviour, as well as their reproductive behaviours such as mating, rearing and mother-calf separation.
- The need to establish sustainable longterm funding streams, so that the programme will be less donor dependent

David Back, an architect, was as impressed as I was with the hard work of the RPUs, and the visit gave him a clear "shopping ist" of things to support with the funds raised for his horny \$50 events. If all goes to pian, David's fundraising efforts will enable:

- The purchase of a new speed boat for the RPUs in Way Kambas. At the moment the team is using a noisy and very slow boat whilst trying to catch wildlife criminals, whose speedy motorboats make the task somewhat impossible
- 40 camera traps to collect data about the rpino populations, and YABI will recruit a specialist to analyse the findings. (Perhaps this time next year we'll be able to publish some of the images caught.)
- A tourism feasibility study, to see if tourism does have the potential to generate income for the RPU programme.

Thanks

My sincere thanks go to David for not only being a great travel companion but also for his dedication fowards rhino conservation. I'd also like to thank Inov. Arief: Waladi and Bibliab for teaching met about the programme. My very special thanks go to the cools at camp 50 for teaching met involvements proger Nasional Coreng. Try it, and think of rhinos.

Maybe even go on line and donate at:

