

Asian Rhino Project

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MAY 2006



A Warm Welcome to our New Member

Wendy Chee

A big thanks also goes out to all members who have renewed their membership, your continued support and dedication is sincerely appreciated and extremely valuable.

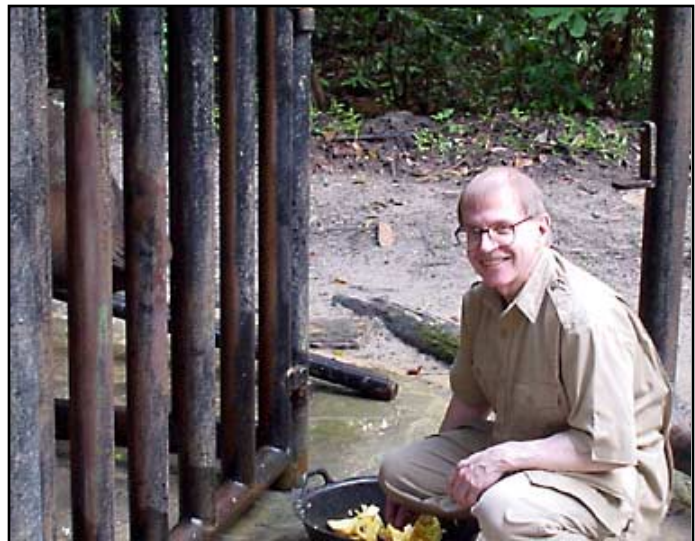
Our membership total currently stands at 123.

Thomas John Foose (1945-2006)

A memorial from the International Rhino Foundation

With great sadness, the International Rhino Foundation (IRF) announces the loss of its most beloved ambassador for rhino conservation. Dr. Tom Foose, 61, IRF Program Director, died on May 17th at his home in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. Tom was one of the founders of IRF, which embodies his lifelong passion for rhino conservation, both in zoos and in nature. He dedicated his life to bridging gaps among people with diverse interests and perspectives, as well as using science to foster national and global collaborations for threatened species management.

Author of numerous scientific publications, Tom received a BA from Princeton University in 1969 and was awarded a Ph.D. in biology from the University of Chicago in 1982. He served as the Conservation Director for the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) from 1981 to 1990 and along with Dr. Ulie Seal developed the first Species Survival Plan program for Siberian tigers in 1983. Species Survival Plans now are a cornerstone for captive species management for the AZA as well as other regional zoo associations. From 1990 to 1992, Tom served as Executive Officer of the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, shaping its programs and focus to include using computer simulation modeling to examine the risks for species extinction, as well as global risk assessments of broad taxonomic groups including identifying species management and research recommendations. Over the past 20 years, his tireless efforts to facilitate cross-organizational and truly international conservation efforts resulted in integrated action plans for species groups ranging from primates to rhinos to tigers, involving zoo experts and field biologists from around the world.



Tom feeding Bina at the SRS Photo: Kerry Crosbie

Throughout stints as Program Officer of the IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group and the International Black Rhino Foundation, as well as through his work with AZA, CBSG and IRF, Tom touched people across the world and inspired them to set aside their personal, national and institutional agendas to focus on preventing species extinctions. Over the past ten years, his primary focus was leading development and implementation of global and national conservation strategies and action plans for rhinoceros in Asia and Africa. Most recently, Tom



**This picture was taken in May this year – just look at the ecstasy in Tom’s face! It was almost scary.
Photo: Karen Payne.**

initiated the North American Save the Rhinos Campaign with the goal of doubling the number of critically-endangered rhino populations in select protected habitats in the wild within ten years.

The family has requested that in lieu of flowers, contributions in Tom’s memory may be made to the International Rhino Foundation and will designated for this Campaign.

We will miss Tom’s many unforgettable characteristics – his sporty safari attire, his penchant for bow ties, his mischievous smile and the twinkle in his eye whenever a rhino came into view. We will miss his dry sense of humor, and his love for the smelly-but-delectable durian fruit (which got him politely ejected from many Asian hotels), as well as many other things. Memories abound - many long-time colleagues can’t see a Coca-Cola can without remembering the early days (before globalization) when Tom brought several suitcases filled with Coke wherever he traveled overseas.

Tom is survived by his children; Rebecca Foose Nesmith, Thomas John Foose III and their mother Virginia Foose; Susan Foose and Michael Foose and their mother, Ellen Foose.



Tom was a great friend and partner of the ARP. Over the past three years we have worked closely

with Tom and the IRF on rhino conservation projects. Tom always did his best to work hard to ensure that we were kept in the loop with all the latest happenings in Asian Rhino conservation and encouraged us to be involved wherever possible. Without his support and mentorship, we would not be where we are now as an organisation; Tom has been instrumental in our development, and we are very grateful for that.

Tom will be sorely missed by all. The Asian Rhino Project would like to forward our deepest condolences onto his family, friends, and fellow work colleagues. Our hearts go out to you in these difficult times. On a personal level I am most grateful to have had the opportunity to share wonderful experiences with Tom from meeting the rhinos, the conservationists working together to protect them, attending conferences, and fascinating conversations at dinners. I was like a sponge when around Tom, absorbing



Kerry and Peter’s first visit to the SRS. We watch on while Robin carries out an ultrasound on Bina. Photo: K. Crosbie.

as much information and experience from him as I could. I would go home so over enriched, motivated and all the more educated; Tom was always so willing to share! I am so fortunate to have had opportunity to learn what I could from one of the best. Tom was a true inspiration, mentor and friend!

The pictures shown here were taken on recent visits to Indonesia and reflect on some of the great experiences we shared.

Kerry Crosbie, Project Director, Asian Rhino Project.



Terri Roth, Tom, Marcellus Adi, and Robin at Jakarta Airport – we seemed to spend a lot of time at airports! Photo: Kerry Crosbie.

Project Updates

ARP and the Wild Life Trust of India

Poaching of the Great Indian One-horned Rhino has come down during last 10 years

By Rahul Kaul, Wildlife Trust of India

The Great Indian One-horned Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) was historically distributed throughout the Indo-Gangetic plains of India and its neighboring countries. By the end of the 17th century however, it had completely disappeared from several parts of its ranges except Nepal and India (West Bengal and Assam). The present distribution is confined to pockets of the Himalayan Terai (Chitwan-Rapti Valley) in Eastern Nepal, Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary and Gorumara National Park in Ganga river valley and Kaziranga, Orang, Manas National Parks and Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, India. The main reason behind a decline in the Indian rhino population is its large-scale hunting. The reason for this excessive hunting is the huge international price commanded by the rhino horn and its use in traditional medicine.

The Wildlife Trust of India undertook a short study with financial support of the Asian Rhino Project to record the population status and hunting trends of the Indian rhino in last decade (1995-2005) in India.

This study has revealed that poaching in Kaziranga National Park, which is the home to a third of global population of the Indian rhino, was relatively lower during the period 1995-2005 than in the preceding decade. In Orang National Park, instances of poaching increased somewhat during 1995-2005 while in Pabitora and Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuaries, situation has not changed much.

Due to large scale poaching during 1986-95, it was assumed that the Indian rhino had become locally extinct from Manas National Park. In the year 2001, a carcass of the Indian rhino bearing distinct poaching signs was found inside the park indicating that this animal was surviving in Manas despite the heavy poaching pressure.



Rhino in Jaldapara WLS. Photo: courtesy of Wildlife Trust of India.

Very recently, a few individuals of the Indian rhino have been reported inside Manas National Park that suggesting the possibility that a few animals may be surviving or have migrated from Bhutan. The overall trend in poaching indicates that the poaching of this animal has come down during the last decade compared to the one before that (1986-95).

Information has also revealed that more rhinos were killed during winter when grasses dried up and probably afforded less cover than in other seasons. This clearly indicates that greater emphasis on patrolling should be placed during winter to check poaching.

The most common method applied for killing the Indian rhino is gun shot in all the rhino bearing protected areas except Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary where electrocution was often used by poachers, taking advantage of the power transmission line passing through this protected area.

Intelligence gathering by the forest department during this period to check trade of rhino horn was much better than 1986-95. Regular operations by the forest department and state police have resulted in many seizures of rhino horns, arms and ammunition and other accessory equipments for poaching. Based on the number of fake horns seized, it is assumed that there might be more fakes available than what was hitherto known. It was believed earlier that the Indian rhino was being killed for its horn only, but recent seizure operations have found a number of rhino skins, teeth and bones besides horn as trade items.

The study also found that most rhino bearing areas are understaffed and are usually managed by casual (temporary) staff. The communication equipment available in the rhino bearing habitats is also not up to

the mark. The number of mobile handsets is less than desirable and in many cases are in a state of disrepair.

However, positive signs show that the population of the Indian rhino is improving in all the rhino bearing habitats. However to date, no rhino bearing habitat is free from poaching pressure. Seeing its vulnerability to poaching, a dedicated action towards combating this should be undertaken which may include improved communication mechanism and trained and well equipped patrol staff among others.

A significantly enhanced level of rhino poaching in Nepal during the civil unrest of last few years indicates that (a) there is still a market for Asian rhino horns and (b) poaching of rhino picks up whenever and wherever protection goes down.

A full report on the survey will be available shortly.

ARP and the International Rhino Foundation

An Update from Nico van Strien

Two young female Sumatran Rhinos at the SRS, Way Kambas NP, Sumatra

The two young female Sumatran rhinos that were rescued from unviable and threatening situations and were moved to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) in Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra, Indonesia end of last year, have settled in well.

Rosa the young female from Bukit Barisan Selatan NP (BBS) is still being treated for parasites, intestinal worms and liver fluke that she apparently contacted from cattle when venturing into the fields and villages outside the National Park. Until all infections have been cleared she will remain in quarantine. The very heavy parasite loads that were found after she was moved to the SRS indicated that the move was timely and probably life saving.

Ratu, the female rhino that was wandering around outside Way Kambas NP in September 2005, has settled in completely and has recently been released in one of the spacious 10 Ha yards of the SRS.



Above: Rosa enjoying a wallow at the SRS.
Left: Ratu
Photos by Karen Payne

Information from villagers provided to the Rhino Patrol Units (RPU) in Way Kambas, indicated that it was repeated confrontation with large groups of people entering the Park for fishing, that caused Ratu to panic and that drove her from the safety of the Park into unknown territory. Frequent encounters with people, even if they do not intend to harm the rhino, is a serious danger for the animals and may also disturb reproduction. This may also be a significant contribution to the poor performance of the Javan rhino population in Ujung Kulon.

The reproductive cycles of both females are now being regularly monitored, with USG examinations and hormonal analysis, and it has been established that both are cycling and could breed. The health of the 'resident' old male, Torgamba, in the SRS is rather unstable, and he has not shown any interest in either of the females for quite some time. The SRS veterinarian staff is trying

to restore his vitality, but so far with limited success, though in early May he suddenly became interested in more than food and sleep and mated with Bina several times.

Sumatran Rhino Managed Breeding GLOBAL MANAGEMENT & PROPAGATION BOARD (GMPB)

The second meeting of the GMPB held in Jakarta on 1 March 2006, discussed a proposal to enhance the breeding potential by moving some of the rhinos. At the request of the Indonesian authorities the Technical Committee of the GMPB developed a proposal involving two of the rhinos. The young male Andalas, the first offspring of Emi and Ipu in Cincinnati zoo, and nearing sexual maturity now, was recommended to move to the SRS to be paired with the two young females Ratu and Rosa.

The older female, Bina, was recommended to move from Indonesia to the USA to be paired with Ipu, the only proven breeder in the captive population. Bina



Bina. Photo: Karen Payne

has unsuccessfully mated with Torgamba for several years in the SRS and is currently showing signs of declining fertility in the form of disturbances in the estrous cycle. She is assessed to be potentially reproductive, but her time for this is getting short, and therefore a pairing with Ipu is the option to have the highest possibility of success.

The GMPB meeting endorsed these moves and the preparations for the transport have started. It is expected that Andalas moves first in October or November this year, followed by Bina several weeks later. This is a wonderful development and will benefit both the *in-situ* program in Indonesia and the *ex-situ* program in the US, both short- and long-term. It is hoped that all parties involved will be able to expedite the movements of these animals as much as possible.

Update of the Indonesian Rhino Conservation Strategy

On 28 and 29 February 2006, a workshop was conducted in Jakarta to review and update the Indonesian Rhino Conservation Strategy of 1993 as well as the IUCN-Asian Rhino Specialist Group's Asian Rhino Conservation Strategy (1997).

The draft report has been produced and is now refined by a Rhino Task Force which will also oversee and catalyze the implementation of the new strategy.

Currently Indonesia holds about 2/3 of the world population of Sumatran Rhinos in 3 main areas, estimated at about 300, and virtually all of the 50 Javan rhinos surviving, in a single area. Though better protection against poaching has resulted in prevention of further losses and early recovery in some populations, the number of rhino of both species is far below the recommended minimum numbers for long term survival.

The workshop endorsed the long-term goal of restoring the populations of both species to at least 1000 individuals in Indonesia. This will require continued strict protection, reservation and safeguarding of significant areas of suitable habitat, and re-introduction of rhinos in areas where they have been exterminated. This is a long term program that will require substantial inputs from all parties concerned, but the goals are achievable as is demonstrated by the recovery of the Indian rhino in India and Nepal, and the Southern white rhino in South Africa. Both were one time as critically endangered as the SE Asian rhinos are now.

Since achieving the goals of viable and secure population of both the Sumatran and Javan rhinos will take a long time, probably as much as a century the program has tentatively be called 'Rhino Century Program' and its is planned to have a high profile launching of the program later in the year.

Dr Nico van Strien, IRF SE Asia Coordinator and Co-chair of the Asian Rhino Specialist Group.

Veterinary Assistance

Through ARP patron Peter Hall's dedication to saving the Sumatran rhino through science, \$100,000 has been forwarded to the IRF to cover operational costs for the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas NP (SRS) and to fund a permanent field vet position. Dr Robin Radcliffe will be filling this position which will have a primary focus on the Sumatran rhino at Way Kambas. The position also extends itself to assist with all species of rhino (Asian and African species) both *in-situ* and *ex-situ* in collaboration with the Fossil Rim Wildlife Centre and Cornell University in the USA.

The ARP is currently exploring other ways in which we can assist through the establishment of an emergency back up team of rhino specialists within Australia to assist the SRS and ARP projects for periods when the IRF field vet is not in Asia or in times of emergency.

Way Kambas Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) Upgrades

In the past year the rhino population at the SRS has doubled with the arrival of the two rescued rhinos Rosa and Ratu. The expected arrival off Andalas from the USA to the SRS will bring the SRS population of rhinos to five. To accommodate all rhino safely and affectively, new paddocks need to be constructed within the sanctuary. The ARP is assisting by sourcing electric fencing materials for the sanctuary and organising for the materials to be shipped over to Indonesia. Construction on the new fences has resumed and is expected to be completed within the next three months.

ARP and SOS Rhino Borneo – Sumatran Rhino Project, Borneo

SOS Rhino Volunteer Program

SOS Rhino established a Volunteer Program in 2002. Volunteers travel to Sabah to assist field staff on rhino surveys in the Tabin Wildlife Reserve by collecting data on the Sumatran rhino and other flora and fauna found in the area. They also help build field camps, teach English to the field staff, and raise funds for the project. Volunteers are introduced to the culture of the people in the area, and have the opportunity to experience, first-hand, a conservation and research program in action. The volunteers then act as agents for conservation by sharing their experience and raising awareness in their workplace, schools and communities.



Constructing a new base camp. Photo Marc D Bowden

The ARP is one of four contributors to this valuable program funding volunteer coordinator Alexter Japrin. If you are interested in the volunteer program, please visit the SOS Rhino website to find out more: <http://sosrhino.org/programs/volunteer.php> .

Below are the experiences that ARP member Marc Bowden had volunteering for 3 months in this program.

SOS Rhino Volunteering

By Marc D Bowden

If you've never traveled anywhere outside the western hemisphere or its 'exotic' enclaves—otherwise known as 'resorts'—but you've a taste for adventure, are open to new experiences, and most importantly, want to contribute to conservation of endangered species, then volunteering as a field assistant for SOS Rhino is definitely for you!

I spent three months in eastern Sabah, Borneo assisting with vitally important fieldwork relating to Sumatran (actually, the Bornean subspecies, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis harrissoni*), population research from October to December 2005. Tracking these extremely elusive animals is no easy feat. Being there for the wet-season, I had to contend with very muddy slopes and often-times unformed tracks, leeches, mosquitoes, sand flies, persistent rain, the occasional snake, and flies flies flies! But I loved it — wouldn't swap it for any other experience, and am looking forward to returning again later this year!

So how could someone possibly want to return? Despite these travails the place is incredibly inviting. First, the local people with whom you work are not only great characters but overwhelmingly generous and kind-hearted. To describe them as friendly is an understatement.

Second, once inside the rainforest—whether it be intact or recovering from logging in past decades—is equally overwhelming in so far as it teems with life. None of my experiences in the tropical rainforests of northern Queensland or the temperate rainforests of Tasmania



Flower found inside the Tabin Wildlife Reserve.

Photo: Marc D Bowden

compares. Life abounds and in so many forms, colours, sounds, shapes, smells, sizes and combinations. The first night at Tabin HQ, two male elephants walking not a meter past the window opening under which I was sleeping woke me in the dead of night. They were quietly going about their own business, chomping on grass and the odd hibiscus, until they began trumpeting—a sound that will stay with me.

Accommodation is admittedly spartan, but the food is great, as is the company. Some hints for potential travelers: Don't expect to actually see a rhino—they're nocturnal and extremely shy. But be sure to have a good camera just in case (and take plenty of silica gel pouches to keep your equipment dry!). And be sure you have a back-up camera (mine died the first week I was there!). There's heaps of other wildlife to see. Here's a quick list of some that I saw: Hornbills, Proboscis monkeys, short and long-tailed Macaques, Orangutans, Water Monitors, Civets, Leopard Cats, Slow Loris, Bearded Pig, Samba Deer, brilliantly-coloured Kingfishers, Otters, and Land Tortoises. Not to mention the myriad beetles, butterflies, dragonflies and other insects, and the distant calls of Gibbons.

I can't help but ask myself: Who wouldn't want that experience? If you've any reservations about going, forget them and just do it! You won't regret it! And feel free to contact me for any advice beforehand! Marc D Bowden 0400 231 932.



Rainforest Tabin Wildlife Reserve.

Photo Marc D Bowden

Special Thanks

Thanks and appreciation goes out to ARP members Mary Norris for her kind donation of a fax machine and Dick Norris who kindly donated a paper cutter for the ARP office and operations.

Events

Rhino Trek Nepal – 13th – 14th February 2007

When it comes to big mountains, Nepal is the centre of the world. From the Bhara Pokhari ridge you'll have uninterrupted views of the Himalayan monsters just a few miles across a glorious valley. Bhara Pokhari offers spectacular alpine scenery, with the added bonus of being off the standard trekking circuit, hence few other tourists and better encounters with local people.

During this 6-day trek you'll reach a maximum altitude of 4100m and the steady pace will be comfortable for people of average-to-good fitness. Accommodation will be a combination of tents and teahouses and with porters carrying your overnight kit you'll only have to worry about your day-pack.

Rhino Trek Nepal is a collaboration between Save the Rhino International (SRI), who'll benefit from your sponsorship, and Community Action Treks (CAT), who'll be responsible for all travel and ground arrangements. CAT is a non-profit organisation, which donates 100% of its profits to projects which improve the social welfare of Nepalese mountain communities. Former SRI Events Manager, Neil Bridgland, will coordinate all aspects of the trek and act as group leader.

After the trek, participants will have a choice of returning to Kathmandu and onto the UK, or extending the trip and transferring to Royal Chitwan National Park. Chitwan provides sanctuary for around 350 Indian rhinos, a critically endangered species of which only around 2,000 individuals survive worldwide. Chitwan is also one of the last strongholds of the Bengal tiger and hosts numerous other wonderful species. What makes a safari in Nepal distinct from one in Africa is the opportunity to watch wildlife from the vantage point of an elephant – a truly unforgettable experience, sharing the open air with the wildlife.

For more information on the trek, please contact:

Neil Bridgland - neilnohair@madasafish.com

Save the Rhino International - www.savetherhino.org

SOS Rhino's Borneo Rhino Challenge – 12 or 5 Day Programs

Climb to the Summit of Mt Kinabalu, cycle "round the Kudat Peninsula at the Northern tip of Borneo, and help SOS Rhino search for the elusive Sumatran rhinoceros of Borneo. You'll see an astonishing variety of rare and endemic plants, primates and birds during your trek and cycle along white, sandy beaches in some of the most beautiful areas of Sabah, Malaysian Borneo. As part of the challenge you will join SOS Rhino's field staff deep in the jungles of Tabin Wildlife Reserve, in search of the last remaining small, shy forest rhinos of Malaysian Borneo.

There will be guides, rangers and medical and mechanical support close by at all times. Most meals are included.

For more information, visit www.sosrhino.org or email info@sosrhino.org

Can you Help Cut Administrative Costs?

The ARP works to keep administration to a minimum so funds can be directed to our important conservation projects. Our offices are in need of essential equipment. If you or someone you know can donate the following items, we would be very appreciative:

- Printer
- Telephone with loud speaker
- Laminator
- Blank CD's
- Any kind of general stationary e.g.; pens, paper, envelopes, folders, paperclips, and so on.

If you can help, please contact Kerry at the ARP head office on 08 89760952 or by e-mail kerry.crosbie@asianrhinos.org.au .

ARP Has Credit Card Facilities

Another small step forward for the ARP organisation - we now have the ability to accept credit card payments from Visa, Mastercard or Bankcard. Our membership forms have been updated and each branch will soon be equipped to take credit card payments for merchandise and donations.

Donations

Just \$5/week goes a long way and donations over \$2 are tax deductible! If you would like to set up regular small donations to the ARP, please don't hesitate to contact us for easy hassle free options. info@asianrhinos.org.au or phone 08 89760952.

ASIAN RHINO NEWS

To keep up-to-date with current events and happenings in the world of Asian rhino conservation, the Asian Rhino project searches regularly for updates on breaking rhino news. The shorts and news story links are available on our website www.asianrhinos.org.au - click on the Rhino News link on the home page.

If you are interested in receiving regular rhino news updates, please let us know by contacting info@asianrhinos.org.au .

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