

ASIAN RHINO PROJECT

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FEBRUARY 2006



A Warm Welcome to Our New Members

Athol & Shirley Schafer
Colin Campbell
Colin Wantling
Danae Squires
Daniel Scarparolo

Donna Livermore
Emma Gatehouse
Joanna Da Rocha
Justin Templer
Kristin Warren
Lorraine Squires

Wayne & Leanne Schafer
Margaret Cox
Pat & Trevor Stanley
Rebecca Norris
Samantha Stephens
Tom Foose



Apologies to Mark Tyler and Claire Bartron who have been members for some time and were not listed previously. Our membership now stands at 125.

ARP Committee Update

As the ARP moves into a new phase, so does Kerry. Kerry and her husband Gary made their move to the Top End mid February and are settling in well. Kerry advised the ARP committee that due to her current position she would like to now carry out her duties in a solely voluntary role to enable these funds to be allocated to other ARP projects and operations. She is still dedicated to, and will continue, working at her current level. This has been effective since December 2005. Kerry kindly donated the sum of her termination pay back to the ARP.

The ARP National Committee and sub-committees have been formed as follows:

National Committee

Chairperson & Project Director
Vice Chairperson & WA Branch Manager
Secretary
Acting Treasurer
Victoria Branch Manager
Grants
Fundraising
Board of Management

Kerry Crosbie
Clare Campbell
VACANT
Petra Hancock
Brooke Squires
Carly Palmer
VACANT
Kerry Crosbie, Andrew Thompson & Nicholas Duncan

Western Australian Branch Sub-committee

Chairperson & Branch Manager
Secretary
Treasurer
Merchandise

Clare Campbell
Martina ter Steeg
Petra Hancock
Holly Thompson

Victorian Branch Sub-committee

Chairperson & Branch Manager
Secretary
Treasurer
Merchandise

Brooke Squires
Donna Livermore
Kelly Hobbs
Kylie Bawden

The ARP now has three offices – NT, Perth and Melbourne. The head office is based in the NT with Kerry and the addresses for each are as follows:

Head Office

PO Box 6
Batchelor Northern Territory
Australia, 0845

Western Australia

PO Box 163
South Perth Western Australia
Australia, 6951

Victoria

Po Box 365
Yarraville Victoria
Australia, 3013

Project Updates

Kerry Crosbie and patron Peter Hall were invited to attend the Indonesian Rhinoceros Conservation Strategy workshop (27 and 28 February, 2006) and the Global Management and Propagation Board meeting (1 March 2006) in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Additional meetings were also set up between the International Rhino Foundation, Yayasan Mitra Rhino and the Asian Rhino Project at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas National Park (24, 25 and 26 February, 2006). The agenda included discussions on joint ventures on veterinary assistance to the SRS, a mobile education unit and the acquisition of a property outside the national park 'Gatot's Place' for a possible rescue/rehabilitation centre and other eco-tourism opportunities. Carly Palmer and Karen Payne (ARP member and Perth Zoo veterinarian) also attended the meetings at the SRS to assist in discussions on the veterinary and research side. Carly was also involved in discussions for Gatot's place and the education unit.



**Participants reviewing the outcomes of the proposed new Indonesian Rhinoceros Conservation Strategy.
Photo Dr Edwin Bosi.**

Veterinary Assistance

It has been decided that the joint Murdoch University and ARP Rhinoceros PhD opportunity will no longer be pursued as we have identified that funding would be better spent on funding a specialist wild animal veterinarian to work in the field. We would like to thank Murdoch University for their support and dedication to the project.

Our patron Peter Hall has committed further funding to the IRF to cover operational costs for the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas NP (SRS). A major portion of this funding is to co-fund a permanent field veterinarian position for the employment of Dr Robin Radcliffe, and other specialist veterinarians who can contribute to assisting the SRS veterinarians in their important work. The ARP and the IRF have also been discussing possible opportunities for specialist Australian veterinarian and researchers to also assist.

Community Outreach and Education

The Asian Rhino Project Victorian Branch has been looking into the possibility of assisting and funding a mobile education unit to travel to villages within and surrounding endangered species habitats. This project is at concept stage, however, with the right partners, should prove to be an exciting venture. SRS manager, Marcellus Adi, has been working on a local education program around Way Kambas and has been in charge of constructing an education centre within the National Park at the SRS. Opportunities for collaboration with this and other programs are being explored.

Eco-tourism/Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Opportunity - Gatot's Place

A property near the entrance to Way Kambas NP is currently up for sale with approx 3 acres of land. There are four buildings on this property that would serve as great accommodation for possible eco-tourism opportunities. The land would be perfect for the development of a rehabilitation centre which is needed within the area for the rescue of wandering wildlife such as bears, tigers and primates. At this stage the ARP does not have the funding or the capability to purchase the property however; we suggested that the information be forward to other NGOs who have the experience to implement such ventures. It is a program that would be very beneficial to the area.

Indonesian Rhinoceros Conservation Strategy Workshop - 27 & 28 February 2006

Local government authorities, Park Officers, Park Rangers, RPU Officers, as well as local and international NGOs were all present at this meeting. Updates were given on each National Park followed by a revision of the 12 year old, 1991 "Indonesian Rhinoceros Conservation Strategy". The new action plan will span from the present up until 2010 and will be re-evaluated every two years. A specialist Rhino Task Force has been formed and will be responsible for the implementation of the new action plan. It is intended that the task force will work to get the President to acknowledge the action plan during his speech at their National Plant and Animal day held on the 5 November 2006.

Summary of discussions on Sumatran Rhino

- Poaching of Sumatran Rhino in Indonesia has been reduced/controlled and although still a significant risk, is no longer the primary threat to the rhino within the protected areas.
- Human encroachment within the parks is the primary threat to rhino with forces reluctant to remove the encroachers due to riots and conflict issues threatening the law enforcer's lives and those of their families. It seems the only way to remove the encroachers is to involve the military and then provide several guard posts surrounding the parks. This can only be carried out by the Indonesian Government and is accompanied by obvious humanitarian issues.
- Illegal logging is still a serious problem and is likely to be linked to the encroachment.

- Forest Rangers are reported to be inefficient due to lack of political will. Park rangers are disgruntled and as a result are reported to be lacking motivation. Rhino Protection Units (RPU) are funded and supported by NGOs and are seen to be better paid, have better workplace support and better conditions resulting in more efficient protection of rhinos. Incentives and motivational support is required for the government employed forest Rangers.
- The Kerinci Seblat NP rhino rescue has been cancelled due to no evidence of rhino whatsoever. It is feared they have all been poached and the population is now a devastating zero! The remainder of patron Peter Hall's funding for the rescue has been allocated to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary operational budget.
- Bukit Tiga Puluh NP (central Sumatra) has been added to the new action plan as a possible site for relocations and rhino populations. It has been suggested by the Tiger and Orangutan NGOs that there were obvious signs of rhino five years ago and that there may be rhino still remaining deep within the heart of the park. This park has recently had exciting developments thanks to the success of tiger and orangutan operations within the area, seeing the park growing rather than reducing in size. Rhino surveys have been suggested.
- Discussions were also held on securing sites in Kalimantan (Borneo) for the reintroduction of rhino. Possible trans border options may be explored with Sabah included in action plan.

Summary of discussions on Javan Rhino

- Ujung Kulon NP is reported to be well protected and there are no real poaching, encroachment or logging issues there at present. The population however has stagnated and may have reached carrying capacity.
- Competition with Banteng populations for food has been identified as an issue and suggestions have been made for a relocation program for some Banteng. Note: Banteng in Indonesia are endangered, but within Ujung Kulon they are thriving because the park is so well protected and also due to their main predator, the Javan Tiger, becoming extinct
- It was recognized that a second population of Javan rhino should be formed, with Gunung Halimun NP near Bogor as the preferred site. Further research and surveys were requested though and it would not appear that any rhino would be moved until 2009-10. Rhinos were last found in Gunung Halimun in the 1920's.

Global Management Propagation Board Meeting – 1 March 2006

With the arrival of two new females to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas NP, the continued pairing of *Bina* and *Torgamba* proving unsuccessful after years of mating attempts, the Director General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, Koes Saparjadi, requested the GMPB revisit, reassess and advise the best mid and long term plan of action for the Indonesian-owned, captive Sumatran Rhino.

Bina, the long standing Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary's (SRS) resident female continues to ovulate, however; after 44 matings she has not fallen pregnant to her partner *Torgamba*. Taking into consideration her age and the ever-increasing risk of pathology, the GMPB recommend moving her to Cincinnati Zoo, USA to be paired with proven breeder *Ipu*. This has been approved by board and permits and travel arrangements are being made for her transfer.

Torgamba, the sanctuary's resident male, has kidney disease



and his reproductive assessment suggests he is not likely to be a viable breeder. However, pairing with the two new females (*Rosa* and *Ratu*) has been recommended to ensure they gain exposure to an experienced male with the hope that he may inseminate them in the process – after all, it only takes one good sperm!

Andalas, the first born calf from the Cincinnati pair is currently housed in Los Angeles Zoo, USA. A recommendation was put forward and accepted to transfer *Andalas* to the SRS in Indonesia to breed with the two new females there (*Rosa* and *Ratu*). *Andalas* is almost sexually mature and it is hoped that he will emulate his father and further the success of the program producing calves in Indonesia.

Rosa has settled in well to SRS. During Kerry, Carly and Karen's visit, x-rays were taken of *Rosa* and *Ratu*'s dentition in an effort to determine the ages of the two new females. *Rosa*'s age estimation is approx 6 years old suggesting that she should be sexually mature. *Rosa* was ultra sounded after our departure from SRS which found a mature follicle. She was paired with *Torgamba* however, no mating occurred. All in all, *Rosa* is reported to

Rosa being x-rayed in the holding yard. Photo: Karen Payne,.



**Ratu in the holding pen after her morning feed.
Photo: Karen Payne**

be in good health with no evidence of reproductive pathology.

According to *Ratu's* dentition, her age estimation was approx 4-5 years old. Should be expected to reach sexual maturity within the next year or so. She has made a full recovery from capture myopathy and will remain at the SRS.

Cincinnati Zoo is hoping that *Emi*, the breeding female, will produce another calf this year and both she and *Ipu* have been paired for mating. The GMPB agree that it is vital to continue the breeding program with *Ipu* and *Emi* and not to separate the pair as they are currently the only successful pair in captivity.

Ipu is getting old now but is continuing to perform in the breeding program so far. With the arrival of the SRS female *Bina* expected in the summer, it is hoped that once settled, they will pair well and reproduce.

Whilst the meeting was focused primarily on the Indonesian rhinos, we also discussed the situation of the Malaysian Borneo rhinos. Sadly it is not looking promising. The female *Gologob* is now 100% blind and the male *Tanjung* has a blockage in his testicles causing fertility problems. In order for this program to succeed, it is recommended that a purpose built sanctuary needs to be developed where the focus is solely to breed this sub-species of Sumatran rhino. In order to address some of the issues associated with the program, the next GMPB meeting will be held in Sabah.



**Carly and Rosa sharing a magic moment at the SRS.
Photo: Karen Payne.**

ARP and SOS Rhino Borneo – Sumatran Rhino Project, Borneo

ARP Funding SOS Rhino Borneo Volunteer Coordinator

The Volunteer Coordinator, Alexter Japrin, funded by the ARP commenced work on February 2, 2006. Alex has a Diploma in Travel and Tourism Management and is currently undergoing familiarization and orientation at Tabin Wildlife Reserve area.

As an important component of the Community Outreach 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.

The ARP, PATA Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the EAZA Rhino Campaign are all contributors to this valuable program. It is envisaged that this program will be self-sufficient after three years with the funds generated from volunteers. The Asian Rhino Project has committed to funding the first year of the three year proposal at this stage.

If you are interested in the volunteer program, please visit the SOS Rhino website to find out more: <http://sosrhino.org/programs/volunteer.php>

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:

- Fax machine
- Printer
- Telephone with loud speaker
- Paper cutter
- 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 8976 0952 or by e-mail

kerry.crosbie@asianrhinos.org.au

USFWS, WWF – Areas, Netherlands Government and ARP - Javan Rhino Project, Vietnam

The ARP has been forwarded a proposal to fund gaps in the WWF, USFWS, and Netherlands Government Javan rhino conservation projects in the following areas:

- Contribution towards 2 years of rhino patrolling and monitoring work.
- Design and production of one conservation education message.
- Contribution towards running the rhino conservation strategy revision workshop.

Over the past 6 years, significant efforts have been implemented to safeguard the remnant Javan Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus annamiticus*) population in Cat Tien National Park – Vietnam. Capacities of the Park have been increased, conservation awareness of the local communities raised and detailed plans to resettle people living deep inside the National Park negotiated and formulated. This work has been achieved with the financial support from the Governments of Vietnam and The Netherlands through the Cat Tien National Park Conservation Project (1998 – 2004), the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the WWF's Asian Rhino and Elephant Action Strategy.

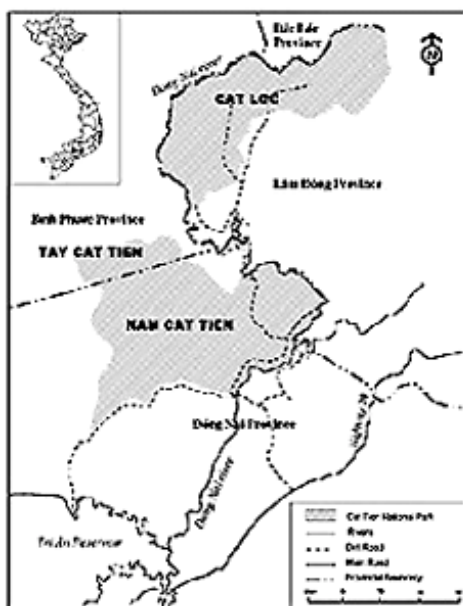
The conservation status of the Javan Rhinos remains unclear. Due to the extremely difficult terrain the rhinos are living in, it is just hard to find signs of the rhinos. Also, different survey techniques point to conflicting information; study of field signs indicate that about 3 rhinos are surviving while DNA analysis indicates that there are 6 or 7 animals present. A few hamlets are located in the direct vicinity of the rhino range. It has been agreed with the local people and Government that these will be resettled to areas which are more accessible outside the National Park. After a long negotiation process in which Governmental and World Bank standards were adhered to, the first steps to actual resettlement are finally being implemented.

The projects seek to maintain minimum law enforcement and data collection over a period of two years as well as to maintain momentum in the process of releasing Vietnam Government funds already committed to implement the full resettlement action plan which is of critical importance for the survival of the Cat Tien National Park in general and the rhinos in particular. Furthermore, a short workshop will be held in 2007, in which the conservation strategy for this rhino population will be updated in the light of additional information on the rhino population currently being collected. Indications that the population is reproducing is critical in this respect.

Threats, issues and specific problems

Since becoming evident in 1988, that a small population of Javan Rhinos survived in Cat Tien National Park, several surveys have been conducted, all revealing alarmingly small numbers. Refined footprint survey analysis techniques deployed in the most recent surveys have indicated even fewer. Based on field evidence it is believed that there are about 3 animals, no more than 5. DNA test results, using DNA extracted from fresh dung; however appears to recognise about 7 individuals.

In the 1980's and early 1990's the local indigenous people have been displaced from lowlands just outside the Park by majority Kinh Vietnamese. Governmental policies favouring the growing of cash-crops (cashew) encouraged these people to replace a fallow period with growing cashew stands, thus replacing natural habitat with permanently cultivated land. The operation of these farms and travel in between villages produces considerable disturbance to rhino's habitat. Plans are in place to resettle those who inhabit areas within the most critical parts of the rhino range. These people have agreed to relocate provided they see an improvement in their living conditions. The increased awareness in the project has interestingly resulted in a greater general appreciation by the local people of the forest and animals in their back-yard. It has created a sense of pride, which in turn enables locals to be of greater direct assistance.



Limited Suitable Habitat - Historically, Javan rhinos occurred in much of South East Asia and were traditionally hunted by local people for their meat. In colonial times they were hunted in good numbers by the French, not far from Saigon (present day Ho Chi Minh City) for trophy. In the 1960's, western scientists thought them to be extinct in mainland Asia. The extinction was driven by indiscriminate hunting, using high-powered guns readily available after the American War. The first post-war survey, attended by a western scientist, estimated the habitat to be about 40,000 ha (Schaller *et al*, 1990). This survey resulted in the establishment of the Cat Loc Rhino Sanctuary, measuring about 35,000 ha, which was integrated into Cat Tien National Park in 1998. A large part of this area is however covered with farmed cashew trees. Cat Loc effectively consists of 3 forest blocks divided by hamlets and associated agricultural lands. Connecting roads function as effective barriers for rhino movement between these forest blocks. At the moment, rhino signs are found in only one of the forest blocks measuring about 6,500 ha, of which about half is effectively used by the rhinos. The unused part consists of steep slopes and / or holds no suitable feeding and / or wallows.

Map: Polet, G. (2003): Co-Management in Protected Area Management; the case of Cat Tien National Park - Southern Vietnam. In: Persoon, G.A., D.M.E. van Est and P.E. Sajsje (eds.) Co-management of Natural Resources in Asia: a Comparative Perspective. London / Copenhagen: Curzon / IIAS / NIAS pp. 25-42

Poaching - The 1988 survey by Schaller *et al.* (1990) was triggered by what was the last reported poaching incident since that date. The high value put on rhino horn and Vietnam's proximity to one of the largest rhino horn markets (China), however, ensures that poaching remains a critical threat for the few remaining animals in Cat Tien National Park. With locals residing within the park boundaries, it is difficult for forest guards to control poaching; it is hard to distinguish people who are en-route to their houses from people who are en-route to set traps. However, since 1988, no incidents of rhinos being poached have been reported. But the loss of one rhino could spell doom over the population's survival, hence the Park authorities' priority to maintain high-level security.

Lack of Reproduction - Naturally, without reproduction, any population goes into decline. The last confirmed record of reproduction from Cat Tien National Park is from 1996. No sightings or footprints of calves have been observed since.

Conversion of Forest into Agricultural Land - At the time of establishment of Cat Loc, large parts of the area were also declared as New Economic Zones, receiving large numbers of people from the over-populated Red River and Mekong River deltas. The 1980's saw a large influx of Kinh majority Vietnamese into the area directly adjacent to Cat Loc, displacing indigenous ethnic minority people from their ancestral lands. They moved into the hills (also part of their ancestral land) of what had become Cat Loc Rhino Reserve. Simultaneously, Governmental policies promoted the production of cash crops for export markets. At present, expansion of cashew has been halted by Park authorities. Existing plantations are estimated to remain productive for another 10 years.

Disturbance by Human Activities - Movement of people between hamlets and noisy machinery from the cashew plantations results in continuous disturbance of sensitive and shy rhinos. Hamlets and associated roads and trails have effectively split the Cat Loc area into three forest blocks of which only one is occupied by rhinos. Rhino specialists would not find it surprising if the continuous disturbance may also prevent rhinos from engaging in courtship and breeding behavior.

Potential Skewed Sex Ratio in Rhino Population -

The habitat in which the rhinos remain is very inhospitable. Steep hills, slippery mud, dense rattan and bamboo make this an area which is hard to traverse while rhinos have ample means to remain concealed. Direct observations have never been made by scientists. Only a handful of local people and forest guards have actually seen a rhino. All estimates of rhino numbers have been made on the basis of signs, most notably footprint and front-hoof sizes. Such signs do not give much clue about the sex of animals although very large footprint sizes (of which some were recorded in the different surveys) are believed to belong to adult males. Since 1999, with the help of WWF, automatic camera traps have been installed in the Cat Loc area in an attempt to get photographic evidence of rhinos. It was hoped that individuals could be recognised and sexes determined. This experiment resulted in fairly limited success. It was difficult to determine if the pictures were of different animals due to limited identifying features in the shots. Only one picture taken of an animal from behind reveals it to be a female. Analysis by Columbia University of DNA captured from rhino dung, indicates that both female and male rhinos are present. All in all, very little is known about the sex ratio and number of animals in Cat Tien National Park's rhino population.



Vietnamese Javan Rhinoceros.
Photo taken by camera trap. Courtesy of WWF-Canon/Cat Tien National Park/Mike Baltzer/Bui Huu Manh.

Current Inputs

- During 1998 – 2004, the WWF-CTNPCCP funded the construction of three guard stations, provided five motorbikes, one river patrol boat, two intensive rhino-status survey, a rhino food-plant survey, contributed to an intensive rhino awareness campaign (funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, see below) and maintained conservation education work. Monitoring of rhinos with automatic cameras was also continued.
- In December 1999 a rhino saltlick, which was increasingly being farmed for lowland rice, was compensated for by the WWF-CTNPCCP. Farmers agreed individually, and the community as a whole, to cease farming the area. Within a few months, wild vegetation grew back and the area is used more intensively by rhinos.
- In 2003, Cat Tien National Park and the WWF-CTNPCCP jointly formulated a *Framework Boundary Re-demarcation and Resettlement Plan for Cat Tien National Park* was negotiated, formulated and accepted by all stakeholders. Implementation of this plan started in 2004, and through a boundary re-demarcation, effectively reduced the size of Cat Tien National Park by excising fringing agricultural lands without conservation value. In this manner, 8,000 of the 10,000 people living within the Park boundaries have been given access to land rights and thus can secure their livelihoods more effectively. In return, it was agreed that isolated human populations deep inside the Park would be resettled. Also, some of the state-owned logging enterprises neighbouring the Park have been partially converted into Nature Reserves, thus increasing the conservation landscape with about 50% (total size of Cat Tien National Park is about 70,000 ha, the new Nature Reserve is about 45,000 ha).

Project Goals And Objectives

Mission for this Project is: To improve the conservation status of Javan Rhinos in Cat Tien National Park. The Project consists of five objectives:

1. In 2007, the rhino conservation strategy adapted to new information, experience and opportunities. Under this objective, the conservation status of the Park's rhinos will be re-assessed.
2. In two years, the undisturbed rhino range doubled to about 15,000 ha. Under this objective, low-level support is maintained to move the adoption and implementation of the Resettlement Action Plan forward.
3. The adequate protection and biological management of Javan Rhinoceros ensured. Under this objective, the existing rhino patrol unit is kept operational and the number of surviving rhinos will be verified in 2007 using data obtained by various opportunistic means.
4. Mutually beneficial co-existence between people and Javan Rhinoceros improved through implementation of pilot resettlement of two hamlets. Under this objective, final implementation of a pilot resettlement of two hamlets is sought.
5. Positive attitude towards Park and its rhinos maintained amongst at least 50% of schoolchildren in the immediate vicinity of the Park. Under this objective, the Park's popular outreach activities amongst school children are maintained.

The ARP has agreed to partly fund the WWF proposal, funding the contribution towards 2 years of rhino patrolling and monitoring work to the value of \$6,600USD (approx \$8,800). We are excited to be able to contribute to what may be the last hope for the Vietnamese Javan Rhinoceros and encourage further donations for this project.

Avant Card Promotion

Last month Avant Card ran a pro bono, 30,000 card ARP promotion worth a whopping \$9,000. Keep an eye out for these fantastic cards - they have been distributed to 420 selected Cafes & Restaurants, Cinemas, Clubs / Bars, Community & Art Centres, Galleries / Museums, Hostels, Hotels, Retail Sites, Sports Venues / Gyms, Theatres, Travel Centres, Universities and Education centres around Australia. Be sure to grab some, send them out to your mates - if you can't find them, contact Kerry 08 89760952 for a list of venues near you.

A special thanks to Avant card for their design assistance and kind support in this promotion, especially to Claire Black who coordinated the production. We would also like to thank ARP member Marc Bowden for initiating this promotion. Marc has been a proactive member in Asian rhino awareness and conservation and this is just one of many of his ingenious ideas.

Thanks also to David Jenike and Cincinnati Zoo for the continued use of the fantastic Andalas picture. David and the Zoo have provided many first class photos to assist us in our promotional materials free of charge and we truly appreciate their support.

Up to 60,000 pairs of eyes will see these cards! What a fabulous way to create awareness!

To learn more about their promotions visit www.avantcard.com.au



E vents

Murdoch University Wildlife Association Project Bonanza, Western Australia

On 2 March, the Western Australian ARP sub-committee took part in a conservation presentation night, along with the Australian Orangutan Project, African Painted Dog Project and Project Sun Bear. It was organised through the Murdoch University Wildlife Association (MUWA) and held in the Kim Beazley lecture theatre at Murdoch. The night went extremely well considering it was Clare, Holly's and Carly's first attempt at an Asian Rhino Presentation. Martina set up a stall to show off our merchandise and offer membership forms. All profits made through MUWA were divided between all four organisations and I am very honoured and proud to say we recently received a cheque for \$250. This is a real credit to the newly established MUWA and for all people involved, including everyone who came on the night, it is great to see more and more people learning and contributing to these important conservation projects. Special thanks goes out to the MUWA group and especially to Nicolette Findlay who coordinated the night.

Holly Thompson, WA Branch.

Asian Rhino Project ARAZPA Display – 26 to 30 March 2006

The ARP WA branch will be holding a display at the 2006 ARAZPA (Australasian Regional Association of Zoos Parks and Aquariums) conference 26 – 30 March. Memberships and merchandise will be on offer and a display of 7 newly designed ARP educational posters will be proudly presented by the WA committee.

Rhino Trek Nepal – 13 – 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.

The proportion of the sponsorship you raise for SRI as part of the trek is pledged to support wildlife protection initiatives in Chitwan, which will benefit rhinos, tigers and the entire ecosystem.

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

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. We will soon be able to keep members and interested people informed via e-mail updates. However, the shorts and news story links are now 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

The ARP Has a New Look! - www.asianrhinos.org.au

Our website has had an overhaul thanks to ARP member Daniel Scarparolo. Daniel has put a lot of time and effort into creating this new look, easy to navigate site and has also updated some of the pages. Our 'Rhino News' page is now functional and is updated regularly with world news on rhinos. The 'ARP Projects' and 'About Us' have also been updated.

Visit the site today www.asianrhinos.org.au

If you have anything to add or would like to be involved in small projects like these, please don't hesitate to contact us on 08 89760952 or at info@asianrhinos.org.au