

Excerpts from
**Van Strien Report on
1982 Deaths
Javan Rhino in Ujung Kulon**

THE GUARDS REPORT

During the interview of the Kapala Resort and the guards, it was found that they had made very careful observations and that they had given good attention to the circumstances under which the dead rhinos had been found. After finding the carcasses they had fenced them against scavengers and reported as quick as possible to headquarters. It is regrettable that the reporting of a very fresh carcass found close to the guardpost was not immediately reacted on by sending a helicopter with a veterinary team to the location.

Since 30 December 1981 five dead rhinos had been found. The positions of the carcasses are indicated on the accompanying map, based on the information of the guards who had found them. The first four carcasses were fresh or only a few days old when they were found, the fifth was much older and had only the bones left.

The descriptions given by the guards of the circumstances under which death had occurred are remarkably similar. Judging from the tracks the rhinos had been walking apparently normal, before they fell over on the side and remained dead. There were no sign that the animal had fallen over before, had stumbled about or had tried to get up after it had fallen over on the side. The animal that died 3 January had scraped with its forefeet in the sand after it had fallen over. Three of the four dead rhinos had been browsing on Pandanus or other plants shortly before they fell dead. Apparently death had come very suddenly and quickly.

Three of the four had defecated shortly before death and the guards reported that the faeces was unusually thin. Two of them had left a whole trail of thin faeces, indicating a severe diarrhoea. For the rest the guards had not seen anything unusual on the carcasses, and the eyes, mouth and anus of the fresh carcass were reported to be normal.

The first carcass, a male, was found on 29 December 1981 and it was judged to be dead for about 5 days. It was found lying on the river Kalejetan, close to the beach, about 250 meters from the guardpost of that name. The animal came from the east through the forest and followed the river for some distance, browsing along the bank, before it dropped dead. No faeces were found.

The second carcass, a female, was found 3 January 1982, on the beach about 1500 meters west of the Karang Ranjang guardpost. It had died only a short time before it was found. The rhino came from the west, walked along the beach for some distance, entered the forest and came again on the beach a little further on. There it browsed on Pandanus and two meters further it dropped dead. It had left a trail of thin faeces. The udder was swollen and milk was seen to drip from the nipples.

The third carcass, a male calf, was found 22 January 1982, 50 meters from the coast, about 1 kilometer west of Karang Ranjang. It was judged to be dead for about three days. It was an almost fullgrown calf and the guards thought that it might have been the calf of the female that died 3 January. On 21 December they had seen a cow with a nearly fullgrown calf in the same area.

It came from west, followed the patroltrail for a short distance and dropped dead. There

were no sign of browsing and about 5 meters before it fell a small amount of soft faeces was found.

The fourth carcass, a male, was found on 30 January, about 2 kilometer east of Karang Ranjang and about 50 meters from the coast. It was judged to be dead for about one week. On 24 January fresh tracks had been found there. About 50 meters before it fell dead it had browsed and it had left a trail of thin faeces.

The fifth carcass, was found on 12 February by a survey team crossing from Cigenter to Cibanowoh. Only bones, horn and nails remained and it was judged to be dead for about one month.

The team that found the 4th carcass reported also tracks of a rhino that dragged with one of its legs. Later this track was followed for more than one hour by PPA-guards, but further along the track no more abnormalities could be seen on the prints.

In the same area also two dead banteng were found. The first on 30 January, about 70 meters west of the guardpost Cibanowoh. This animal was judged to be already dead for about 2 months. A much fresher banteng carcass was found in the upper reaches of the Cibanowoh on 13 February. This was judged to be dead for one week. Both were adult males.

ADDITIONAL NOTES by Van Strien (11 January 1991)

It should be realized that only rhino carcasses that could be seen or smelled from the guardposts and patrol trails were found. No good sweep was made through the reserve to check for more dead rhinos. I estimate that at most 20% of the reserve was surveyed. If the epidemic was more wide spread many more dead rhinos could have been undetected.

Later 2 more skeletons were found by students of the SECM, in the western part of the reserve. I believe that a fair part of the population died in that period, at least many more than the 5 reported. It is a fact that before the disease tracks and other sign of rhinos were much more numerous than after.

Hardi Amman (Schenkel's student) was of the opinion that there were at least 80 possibly up to 120 rhinos in UK in 1980/81. This is based on comparison of Census results of PHPA with the population in his study area (e.g. the census reported 2, while he knew that 5 animals were present). These results have always been suppressed by Schenkel - people would loose interest if they knew there were so many (!!) left. But I think they may be more realistic than the traditional 60 as indicated by the Census. The methods of the Census are such that never more than about 60 animals can be detected - not even if there were 200 or more around.

Census results after the disease may be more reliable because the method works best in low densities.

My opinion is that:

- a) Probably up to 60% of the population died from 80.100 down to 40.50.
- b) The population has not completely recovered to carrying capacity of at least 100-120 animals.