Indonesia:

Water filters enhance rhino protection

The Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) programme was initiated in Indonesia in response to the catastrophic decline in Sumatran rhino numbers. It works to strengthen the protection and management of the National Parks. RPUs exist in Bukit Barisan Selatan and Way Kambas National Parks in Sumatra, and Ujung Kulon National Park in Java.

Sugondo and Sectionov (Inov)

Rhino Protection Unit programme, Way Kambas National Park

y name is Sugondo and I have been a member of the Way Kambas Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) for ten years. I live in a local village near Way Kambas National Park and was recruited to join the RPU through a special selection and training process. Our RPU consists of four people and we spend 20 days each month on patrol in the forest. When we are on patrol, we make camp in the forest each night, near the river, and make rice and coffee or tea for dinner. We have to

Thanks!

Our thanks in turn to the Mark Leonard Trust, which gave us a grant of just over £1,000, to buy water filters for the RPUs. This followed a visit by Trustee Mark Sainsbury to Indonesia, when he met and talked with members of the patrol teams. Our thanks also to Peter Bernstorff of Vestergaard Fransen, which makes the Life-Straw system we purchased, for making the kits available at a special rate.

We would also like to thank Chester Zoo, which gave us a grant of £4,191 for ongoing running costs (salaries etc) of the Rhino Protection Unit programme in Sumatra. We're deeply grateful for their ongoing support.



In March 2009, Save the Rhino donated 20 water purifiers to our Sumatran RPUs. Each unit now carries a water purifier with them on patrol. They are very practical and easy to operate. Now we can easily turn muddy, polluted water into clean water that is safe to drink, and we don't get sick anymore. Having the water purifiers also means we don't have to spend as much time looking for fresh water and can spend more time doing surveys and patrols.

Thank you, Save the Rhino!

Asian Rhinos a speciality

Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar

use water from the river to drink and

cook, because carrying water with us

would be too hard and too expensive.

In Indonesia we have a rainy season and

a dry season. During the rainy season,

we can find fresh, clean water to drink,

but during the dry season, it is very hard

to find fresh water. The water we have to

use during the dry season is often muddy

and polluted, but we have no choice - we

have to use that water. Every dry season,

at least one or two members of the RPU

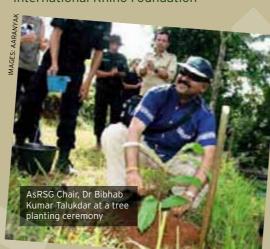
and miss patrol days. This is bad for us,

and bad for the rhinos!

become sick from drinking the dirty water,

Chair - IUCN SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group, Secretary General - Aaranyak, Asian Rhino Coordinator - International Rhino Foundation

he Asian Rhino Specialist
Group (AsRSG) is one of the
Specialist Groups operating
under the Species Survival
Commission (SSC) of the International
Union for the Conservation of Nature
(IUCN). The IUCN's SSC is a science-based
network of some 7,500 volunteer experts
from almost every country of the world,
all working together towards achieving the
vision of "A world that values and
conserves present levels of biodiversity."



ULTRASONOGRAPHY

- the ultimate tool for Sumatran rhinos

Deep inside Way Kambas National Park, Indonesia, in a fenced sanctuary encompassing 100 hectares of natural rainforest, live five of the last Sumatran rhinoceros on earth. Just ten of these primitive hairy rhinos are held in captive facilities worldwide, making the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) holder of half the extant captive population.

Drs Robin W. Radcliffe, Dedi Candra, and Andriansyah Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary

he goal of the SRS is to manage its captive rhinos to help augment wild populations that remain threatened. The animals are part of a global managed breeding programme for the species, with hopes of adding numbers through reproduction and new scientific knowledge that will enhance our understanding of these rare and secretive forest rhinos. Andalas, a new herd bull, arrived at the Sanctuary in early 2007 and brought with him a revival of hope for the sanctuary breeding programme as the centre's newest breeder. He is now meeting the females on a daily basis and has already been introduced to his future mates.

Making the decision on when to put the rhinos together at the right time can be a challenge, especially for a species like the Sumatran rhino that is largely solitary in

the wild and would not normally associate with another adult until the female is near oestrous and receptive. Drs. Dedi Candra and Andriansyah work together with the rhino keepers to ultrasound each female on a regular basis to learn about each female's reproductive cycle.

Ultrasound is now a practical piece of the rhino veterinarian's medical equipment arsenal and allows one to plan the male and female rhino mixings based on the size of the female's follicle (which contains the maturing egg). Work done at the Cincinnati Zoo has helped guide efforts to introduce rhinos at the most opportune time. Of course, if a female does become pregnant, the ultrasound will also help make the exciting diagnosis by allowing the doctors to directly visualize the foetus. Part of the effort is based on sound science - the ultrasound allows

one to carefully measure and record the daily changes in each rhino female's developing follicle. And another part is based on sound management - following behavioural clues to help guide the most opportune moment to open the gate that separates the male and female rhinoceros.

A great deal of hope rests on Andalas as a future breeding animal for the Way Kambas Rhino Sanctuary, and with the help of ultrasound we may one day soon see the beating heart of an unborn rhino.

Grants

Our thanks to Chester Zoo and the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation, who gave us a total of £14,019 towards the ongoing running costs of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary.

Most members are deployed in more than 100 Task Forces or Specialist Groups such as the Asian Rhino Specialist Group, which addresses Asian rhino conservation and related topical issues, such the reintroduction of species into former habitats or animal health. Members include: researchers; government officials; wildlife veterinarians; zoo and botanical institute employees; protected area managers; experts on Asian rhinos; and

Amongst other things, the AsRSG

international NGOs.

- Review the status and trends of Asian rhino populations in the wild and captivity as well as collate information on poaching
- Facilitate information exchange and

- collaboration between range state members, other members and invited delegates
- Provide technical information on the management of rhinos, and facilitate cooperation on conservation-related research on Asian rhinos through the presentation of papers
- Use working groups at the meeting to provide technical support to facilitate decision-making and the development and implementation of appropriate rhino policies, and to advice on the implications of various policy options
- Provide a forum for feedback from donor agencies to rhino conservationists in the field

Since my appointment as Chair in June 2008, I have started to develop even greater cooperation between the Asian

rhino range states, by arranging regular meetings and workshops as follows:

- Bi-ennial AsRSG workshops involving all Asian rhino range countries
- Annual AsRSG South East Asia workshops focusing on Javan and Sumatran rhinos (Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam)
- Annual AsRSG Southern Asia workshops focusing on Indian rhinos (Nepal and India)

Grant

Our very grateful thanks to the Taiwan Forestry Bureau, for its recent grant of \$5,000 towards the annual South East Asia workshop, to be held in February or March 2010 in Bogor, Indonesia.