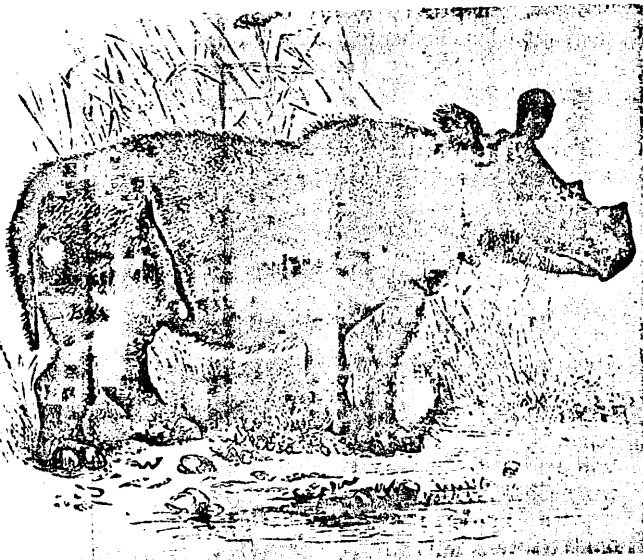


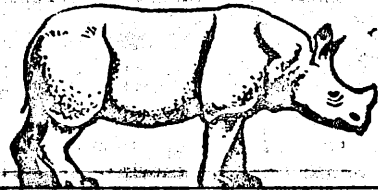
## A Study of Sumatran Rhinoceros

One time both the Sumatran (*Didermoceros sumatrensis*) and the Javan (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) rhinos were found throughout the Malayan Peninsula. The Javan species is believed to have been exterminated some thirty years ago and the population of *sumatrensis* has been reduced to only a few scattered individuals surviving in very remote areas of the country. The Chief Game Warden has therefore initiated a study of the remaining species in order to collect the necessary information to allow for its management and assist its survival. A US Peace Corps Volunteer, Rodney Flynn, has been given the responsibility of surveying the country to determine the size of the remaining population and the ecological requirements of the animals.

Since his arrival here in December, 1974, Rodney has managed to locate an area in the southern part of the Peninsula called the Endau-Rompin which appears to contain a larger population of *sumatrensis* than was formerly assumed. He thinks this area may provide a suitable place where the survival of the species can be assured if proper conservation measures can be put into effect. The rhino in West Malaysia is completely protected under the Protection of Wildlife Act of 1972, and, according to Rodney, there has been no reported cases of poaching over the past ten years. He thinks, therefore, that if proper law enforcement continues, poaching will not be a serious threat. The most serious threat, on the other hand, is considered coming from habitat destruction and disturbance, phenomena closely associated with economic development and "progress".



A very preliminary estimate of the population numbers some 25-40 animals for West Malaysia and of these 15-20 may be located in the Endau-Rompin area alone. It thus seems imperative for the future of the species that this area be safely set aside as a rhinoceros sanctuary with the elimination of all habitat destruction and disturbance. At the present time plans are under way to set aside Endau-Rompin as a National Park but the proposal appears inadequate since it does not give authority for management to the Game Department, but leaves total authority for management decisions to the respective State Governments of Pahang and Johore where the reserve will be situated. An advisory committee will be set up to make recommendations for park development of which the Federal Game Department will be a member. The committee will be heavily balanced in favor of exploitation, however, and the prospects for the rhino are under present circumstances not bright. The proposal calls for an inner zone of approximately 650 sq. km. which will be set aside as a sanctuary for conservation purposes. Circumscribing this area will be a much larger one (approximately 1,620 sq. km) which shall act as a buffer zone. This entire outer zone will be subject to logging, mining and other forms of exploitation.



JAVAN RHINO

As far as the rhino is concerned, this arrangement may not be adequate for its survival. Only half of its range is included within the sanctuary and a segment also extends even outside of the buffer zone. The species is now in such low numbers that every effort must be made to prevent the population from becoming splintered further into small, isolated, non-reproductive sub-populations. This could easily happen with the added disturbance of logging and improper tourism development.

The research programme will focus around gathering information about the Sumatran rhino in conjunction with land management and land use evaluation of the area. It will concentrate its efforts on the western section of the Endau-Rompin which is a low mountainous range situated on the state borders of Pahang and Johore. It is dominated by virgin lowland dipterocarp rain forest with some sections having high percentage of commercially important species. Later this year Rodney hopes to be able to trap several animals for marking purposes and initiate a radio tracking programme to tackle the difficult problem of monitoring movements, homerange, habitat selection and social behaviour. This kind of information is critical at this point in time because valid data are needed to support a case for the proper inclusion of a rhino sanctuary in the Proposed Endau-Rompin National Park.