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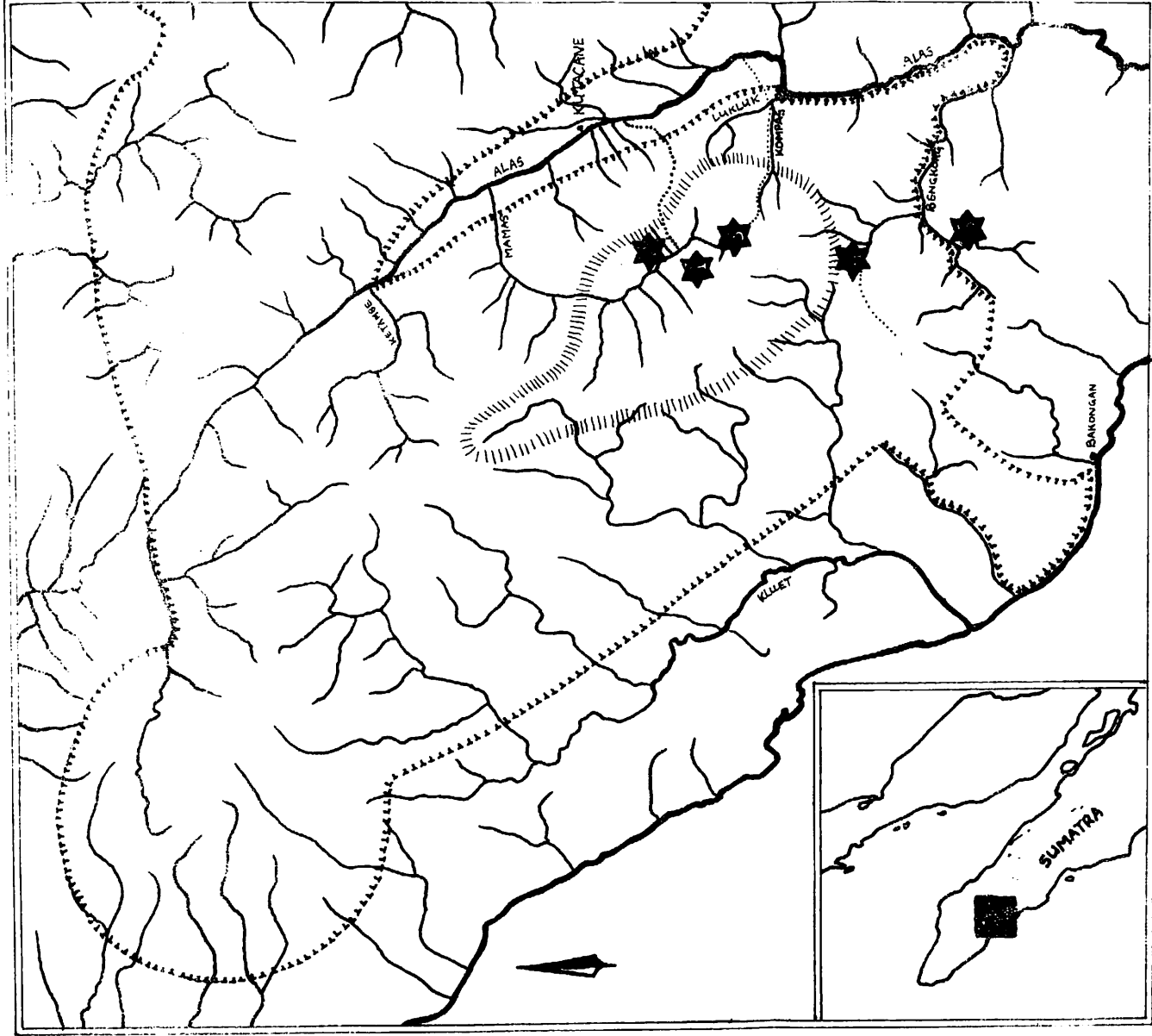
Sumatran Rhinoceros International Conservation Program.
Intensive Program.

Special Report no. 2
Rhino-poaching in the Gunung Leuser Reserve.

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N.J. van Strien
Nature Conservation Department
Agricultural University
Wageningen, the Netherlands

d/a Dinas PPA
Kutacane
Aceh Tenggara
Sumatra
Indonesia.



..... BOUNDARY OF RESERVE \\\\\\\ RHINO-AREA route used by poachers

★ rhino poaching

GUNUNG LEUSER RESERVE, NORTH SUMATRA. SCALE 1:750,000

Introduction.

This report contains more information on the rhino-poaching, described in Special Report no. 1 : Rhino-traps in the Gunung Leuser Reserve.

Also information is given on two other attempts to kill rhinos in this reserve, discovered the previous months.

The traps in the upper Mamas.

Through an informant the local branch of the Nature Conservation Service found out the identity of the poachers, working in the upper Mamas (See Special Report no.1). A conspiracy was set up and one of the poachers was caught red-handed, whilst carrying 26 kilo of rhino-bones out of the reserve.

The leader (pawang) and his mate, living in the region of Blangkejeren, fled to the forest and remained hidden since. The caught poacher is prosecuted and jailed. He gave some usefull information to the police about their poaching.

He stated to have begun building traps in the Mamas Area in July 1974 and that a new series was built in April 1975. The traps were constructed on two places. The first (1 on the map) had seven traps and was described in the previous report. The second place (2 on the map) was later also discovered and here 9 traps were built. They were constructed over rhino-paths on a ridge, at altitudes between 1500 and 1700 meter.

In the period between April and July 1975 they caught 3 rhinos and sold the horns to a Chinese in Medan. They also took the nails and the teeth. The remainder was burried. In April 1976 one of the skeletons was dug up and with this the man was caught.

The price the horns fetched in Medan is not known, but in total he received 100.000 Rupiah (\$ 220) from the pawang. When they shared equal, which is not very likely, this would mean about 40.000 Rupiah for 100 grams. Probably they collected considerably more.

In July 1975, during the first Mamas-expedition, when the first traps were destroyed, the poachers also went to the Mamas. Seeing a strange camp, they didn't dare to go further and only inspected the traps east of the Mamas. After destroying the traps they returned. Therefore they almost certainly didn't find the rhino, who ran in the western traps,(see special Report 1). This means that at least 4 animals were killed, of which 3 were found.

An informant, who accompanied the poacher in April 1976, stated that 5 rhinos were killed, but only 4 were found. Together with the animal probably killed in the western traps, this makes a death-rate of 6. It would not be surprising if the poacher didn't tell everything to the police and that the last figure is correct. So at least 3 rhinos were killed, and probably 1 to 3 more.

That it is possible to cath so many rhinos in a few month, proves the efficiency of the spear-falls in a good rhino-area. A few more of these attempts and the present healthy population in the centre of the Leuser Reserve, will be reduced to a few wandering individuals. With a few series of traps, scattered over an area, the bulk of the rhino-population can be killed in a very short time. The few survivors will lose contact, and, unless other

animals move in from elsewhere, propagation will stop and the rhino will vanish from the area.

Note: In the same period these poachers also made traps in the region of Takengon, in northern Aceh. But there they didn't succeed in catching one. Rhinos are probably already almost exterminated in this area.

Rhino-poaching at Sungei Pinus.

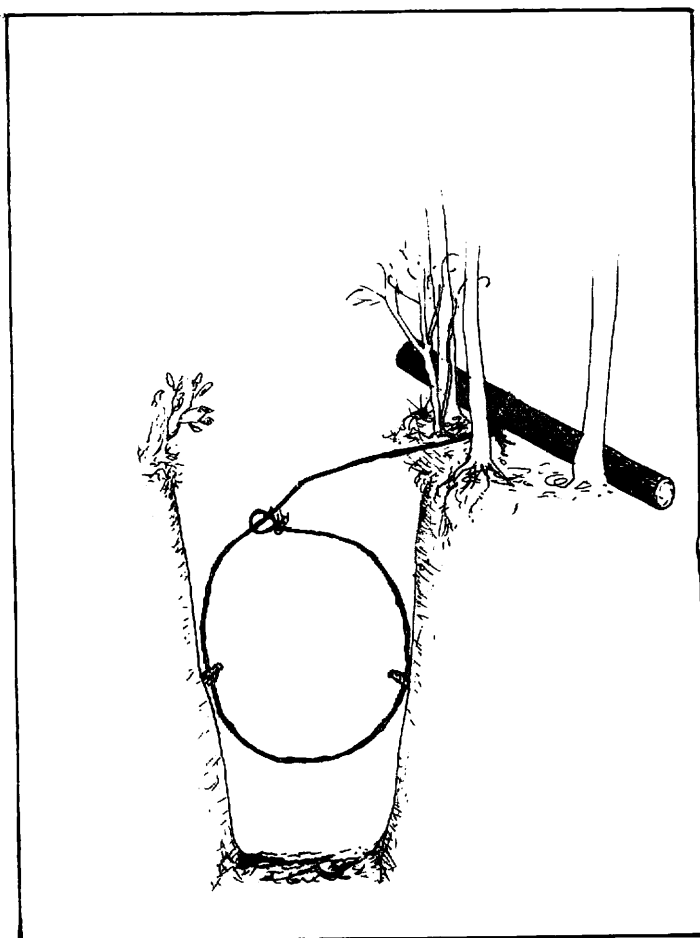
On the 2nd of March 1976, during the fourth Mamas-expedition, a new attempt to kill rhinos was discovered at Sungei Pinus (3 on the map). In this area there are three major salt-licks, frequented by rhinos. The poachers, who were there about two weeks before, used an old three-hide, left behind by a former survey, as shooting-platform. From there they had an excellent view on the most important salt-lick. They also used a rattan signal-thread, stretched from the platform to the salt-lick, and obviously had a strong searchlight.

On the paths, leading to all saltlicks, they placed 7 snares. Close to the licks these paths are deeply worn out in the soil, forming narrow gullies, sometimes more than one meter deep. Here the snares were positioned (see figure).

The snares were made of thin wire cable, with a loop of about 60 cm diameter, and tied to a pole of about 1.5 meter long. The pole was placed behind a few small trees.

Although it is doubtful that a rhino can be stopped by this kind of snares, they very well can get hurt or can be hampered by the string around the neck or leg and eventually die. Judging from the tracks no animal was shot or ran into the snares.

The poachers were obviously well-known with the area and entered along the Kompas river. Their identity is not yet found out, nor who supplied the gun. Probably they will never be found and prosecuted.



RHINO-SNARE FOUND AT SUNGEI PINUS

Rhino-poaching at Sungei Bengkong.

Already for some time there were rumours that people from the west coast, from the town of Bakongan were poaching rhinos in Bengkong Area. Therefore a patrol was sent to this area. They started the 2nd of September and followed the Bengkong river and one of its side rivers. They returned along the Kompas river.

The rumours proved to be true and the patrol found tracks of people entering the Bengkong area from the west. In the region of Sungei Pacet (4 on the map) rhino-traps under construction were found. In the upper reach of the Bengkong (5 on the map) a white flag, a token used also by rhino-poachers, was found.

The Bengkong area is regularly visited from the east by fishermen, but no signs of rhino-poachers entering from this side were found. The Bengkong area is outside the main rhino-area and rhinos only irregularly wander there, but the head-waters of the northern tributaries form the southernmost outpost of the rhino stronghold. From Bengkong, with its good stock of fish, the poachers can rather easily attack the rhino-population from the south and this area will have to be patrolled regularly.

Conclusions.

It is made clear that the rhinos in the Gunung Leuser Reserve are still threatened by poaching. Although the present rhino-area can only be reached with considerable effort, this has not stopped the poachers. Despite all sorts of physical barriers they have found their way to the last hidingplace of the Sumatran rhino and will continue to do so. Attacks have already come from three sides now and the success of one of the attacks proves the vulnerability of the rhino-population.

Two or three parties, poaching in the Mamas area the adjoining Lukluk, Kompas and Bengkong head-waters, for only a few seasons, will be able to kill the largest part of the stock, estimated at not more than 50 individuals. Then only the virtually inaccessible upper vallies of the eastern tributaries of the Kluet river are left for the rhino. In this extremely rugged and steep mountain-area conditions are likely less favourable, even for the rhino. When the Mamas area is lost, there is not much hope left. And when the present research and patrol program was not started in this area last year, the point of no return would have been rather close by now.

Only regular patrols by an anti-poaching unit can reduce the danger and prevent the poachers from penetrating further and further into the core area of the rhino. When some strategic routes and places are visited a few times a year, especially in the dry season, the present rhino habitat can be protected quite effectively. At the moment the whole upper Mamas drainage is patrolled by the rhino-research and the southern part of the rhino area is patrolled by a special anti-poaching unit. As long as these patrols continue it is not likely that many more animals will fall victim to poachers in these areas.

It is impossible to prevent poaching fully, it can only be reduced to a much less harmful level. The reserves are so large and often so difficult to penetrate, that it is unfeasible to control every river and every ridge. Every poacher will always have a fair chance never to be discovered. Especially when in the future the rhino will return to other areas, as is hoped and is persued by the intensified control, poaching-prevention will be much more difficult. As soon as the rhino returns to more accessible areas, poaching will rear its head there and the harvest of years will be lost in a short time.

To protect the present rhino-area one or two patrol-groups are sufficient. But as soon as rhinos are reported in areas they have not visited for years, this area will have to be included in the patrols. Then more units will be needed, probably up to 5 or 6. At long last all of the accessible part of the reserves will have to be controlled. Only then the rhino will have a change to gain back some terrain.

In order to make the anti-poaching efforts effective, it is of utmost importance that the rhinos in the Leuser are continuously studied by a specialist with excellent knowledge of the terrain and the areas. Not (only) for scientific reasons, but simply to monitor the occurrence and distribution of the animals and to direct the patrols accordingly. The rhinos in the Leuser need and deserve the best protection they can get. This can only be achieved when a special task-force is brought in the field, headed by a competent person, and functioning for a long time.

All this can be made much easier when people are made more conservation-minded and more respectful for the conservational legislation. Even more help can be expected from the elimination of the trade in rhino-horn, especially in cities like Singapore, Hong Kong and Bangkok. But for the near future not much can be expected in this regard and control in the field is the only effective measure. Only on the very long run the partolling can probable be less intensified, but will never become superfluous.

There are still Sumatran rhinos in the Leuser Reserve and they still can thrive in a rather large area and they are still propagating, but they need the best guarding against the greed and indifference of a large part of the inhabitants of the earth. When they don't get that now, it can soon be too late.