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Sumatran Rhinoceros International Conservation Programme.  
Intensive Programme

Progress Report No. 5  
Seventh Mamas Expedition  
August - December 1976

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## Introduction

In the second half of 1976 one more expedition to the study-area in the upper Mamas was made from October 8 till November 1. This period has been chosen to avoid the Moslim fasting-month and the important feast-days afterwards. The strict fasting, my field-assistants keep in this period, increases the physical burden of work in the forest and this would probably have shortened the expedition. The second Mamas expedition was made in the Moslim fasting and has been considerable more strenuous for my man than usually.

Directly after the expedition (November 9) my wife and I left Indonesia for a short leave to the Netherlands. We returned on the 8th of January, 1977.

## Seventh Mamas expedition

October 8 - November 1, 1976

For this expedition a small helicopter (4-seater Hughes 500) has been chartered from Pelita Air Service. We were hampered by persistent clouds on the mountains and we had to return to Kutacane. Only at 1 pm the clouds broke and it was possible to get through to the Mamas. Due to the poor visibility and the rather limited capacity of this helicopter we had to transport the party and the goods in three flights.

The Central camp and the stock were in good condition. October 10 we moved to camp Aceh and October 15 to camp Uning. The plastic roofs of both camps were blown off and most of the food, stored there, was spoiled. The locally available plastic is getting hard and brittle after 8 to 10 months in the forest and has to be replaced.

October 18 we went back to camp Central and October 23 on to camp Lukluk. Here, too, the roof was blown off. October 26 we moved to a new camp at Sungai Pinus, made by the anti-poaching patrol. October 29 we went to camp Pawang and November 1 we walked back to Kutacane.

Although the weather was rather bad (only five days without heavy rains), the results of the expedition are satisfying. We found several good fresh tracks and made good plastercast-series. Also a fair collection of foodplants and fresh faeces could be made. We could follow fresh tracks for several kilometers and four times we had a direct observation of a rhino. Two times a rhino was heard and two times it was seen.

On October 15 we had a rather spectacular encounter with a rhino and its half-grown calf. At about half past six pm they suddenly appeared swimming in the river in front of camp Uning. We had a perfect view when they climbed, apparently unalarmed, the opposite bank of the river. They walked slowly along the river for some meters, before disappearing in the growth. We waited until dark, in case they would return along the same path after visiting one of the saltlicks nearby. As they did not return we swam over and followed the track by torchlight, to cover some good prints with plastic for protection against rain.

Fortunately it didn't rain for the next two days and we could make good plastercasts of mother and calf. The following day we followed the track for about 4 km. At 2 pm we had made up with them and we got another glimpse of the rhinos. They were alarmed by our approach.

### Progress in 1976

In 1976 four expeditions were made to the Mamas-area, and a total of 95 days were spent inside the rhino-habitat. Patrols were made there, covering a distance of about 1000 km.

The plastercast-collection is almost 200 pieces now and 99 footplants are collected. Considering the extreme low density of the rhinos and the difficult working-conditions, caused by the remoteness and expanse of the area, the unfavourable weather and the physical strain required, we have to be very satisfied with the results obtained. Generally speaking, all plans worked out well and the field-work has been rather succesful.

Next to the field-work, much time had to be spent on the preparation of the expeditions and on the preservation of the collection. The preparations for an expedition are very time and energy consuming. They start about three weeks before an expedition by going to Medan to negotiate for the helicopter. Mostly a helicopter has to be lent from one of the oil-companies working in North-Sumatra. Even when an agreement is reached for the use of one of their machines, no date can be fixed beforehand. In general we have to wait in Medan untill the helicopter is free for a few hours. This uncertainty and the lack of communication with the party, waiting in Kutacane, make careful planning very difficult. The high costs of this operation add much to the tension.

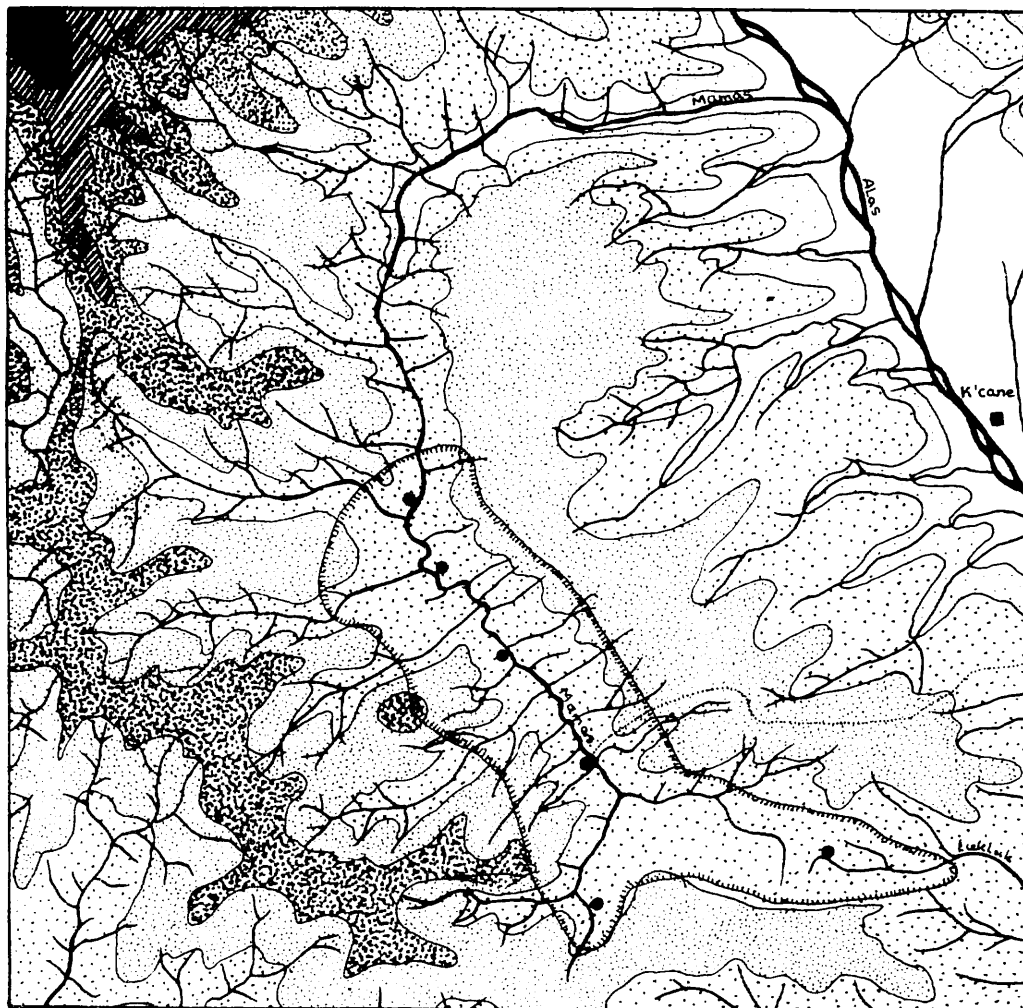
In the days before the expedition large quantities of food have to be bought, cleaned, dried and packed in plastic and tins. All the other luggage, needed for the research or the camping has to be packed and the party has to be instructed.

Together with the time needed for reporting, administration, formalities, maintenance, travel etc. not much time was left for the working out of the collected data and material. Only on the study of the plastercast some time was spent, but a lack of space and facilities form a serious handicap.








In 1977 the situation will be the same and most of the collection and data will not be elaborated before the field-work is ended. In the circumstances, to concentrate on collecting of data will be the wisest policy.

### Continuation in 1977

In 1977 the research will be continued on the same programme as in 1976. Four expeditions are planned, as far as possible in the dry periods. Two expeditions will be made between the end of January and half of April. Two expeditions are planned in June and August. In May we hope to go to Malaysia, to visit some rhino-areas in this country.

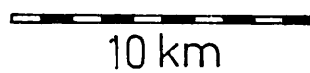





GUNUNG LEUSER RESERVE - MAMAS

	3000_3500 m
	2500_3000 m
	2000_2500 m
	1500_2000 m
	1000_1500 m
	500_1000 m
	0_500 m

altitude

scale 1: 250.000



-  STUDY AREA
-  CAMP
-  FOOT PATH