



## SUMATRAN RHINO IN KALIMANTAN (BORNEO)

by A.P.M. van der Zon

Throughout their range, the world's species of rhinoceros are endangered because of a false belief based on the mythical properties of their horns. (TIGERPAPER III: 2 and III: 3). The Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*), the only representative of the family in Kalimantan, faces another threat as well. This rhino is an animal which lives in primary forests, and due to the destruction of this habitat by loggers, its fate is in double jeopardy.

In 1931, the Sumatran rhino was declared a fully protected animal and until 1935 was reported frequently in the mountains of Kalimantan even though experiencing severe hunting pressure by the Dayak people with their spears and pit traps. From the few reports made since 1935 it seems that trapping has continued up to the present.

In recent years the rhino has only been reported from Kutai in East Kalimantan and in Kutai Nature Reserve which was specially designated for the survival of this animal; however it is believed that rhinos have been exterminated in the Reserve.

In 1976, I made a trip to check on the presence of the Sumatran rhino in an area north of Kutai and found two different sets of tracks. In central Kalimantan near Bukit Raya (the summit of Kalimantan) there was no evidence of rhinos seen during my one month expedition in the mountains. Also, according to the local Dayak villagers, there are no rhinos left in the central part of the mountain range.

Therefore, the only possible solution for the survival of the Sumatran rhino in Kalimantan is to extend Kutai Nature Reserve northwards. Unfortunately, this area has a high timber value and logging concessions have already been issued; however the companies have yet to commence logging operations.

Under these circumstances, it is imperative that conservationists throughout the world make a concerted effort to safeguard the Sumatran rhino as soon as possible. This means that action must be taken to revoke the logging concession, enforce strict penalties on rhino and timber poachers, and to make sincere appeals to the Dayak people to preserve this threatened animal in one of its last refuges in Southeast Asia.

*The author is a biologist, who works with the FAO Nature Conservation and Wildlife Management Project, P.O. Box 2338, Jakarta, Indonesia.*