

OPERATION JAVAN RHINO

If I'm honest, I didn't know that there were five species of rhino until I came for my interview here at Save the Rhino. I was somewhat smug about my ability to distinguish black and white rhino and I had a niggling feeling about some rhinos in Asia but that was about it. The vast majority of my life is now dominated by rhinos and I can bore you to tears with facts and figures about them, but I suspect I wasn't alone in my somewhat uninformed beginnings. One thing I certainly didn't know about was the Javan rhino. I do now.

Cath Lawson | Office and Communications Manager

The name Javan rhino is somewhat of a misnomer. As recognised by the Javan rhino's Latin name, *Sunda rhino* would be far more appropriate, but even that doesn't convey how widespread the Javan rhino once was. This little known species was once common from Assam and Bengal eastward to Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and southwards to the Malay Peninsula and the islands of Sumatra, Java and possibly Borneo. Today, the Javan rhino is classified as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List, listed under Appendix I of CITES and a contender for the unenviable title of 'rarest large mammal on earth'.

Recent reports suggest that there are just two known populations of Javan rhino remaining. Ujung Kulon National Park on the island of Java in Indonesia conserves between 38–44 rhinos, based on a 2008 census. The Cat Loc part of the Cat Tien National Park in southern Vietnam may hold another five animals, arguably a different subspecies, but there have been no reported sightings or photos in the last three years and one has been found deceased in the last year.

This species is on the verge of extinction and I didn't even know it existed

The rarity of the Javan rhino, combined with their shyness, penchant for thick forest and absence in captivity, means that it is very, very unusual to see one and this has led to it being the least studied of the five rhino species.

Researchers rely on indirect techniques such as camera trapping and faecal analysis to monitor population and individual health and learn about behaviour. What we do know is that the Javan rhino belongs to the same genus as the Indian rhinoceros and this is demonstrable by a number of physical similarities. Like the Indian rhino, the Javan rhino has just one horn and mosaic-ed skin which resembles armour. Contrastingly, at between 900kg and 2,300kg heavy and 1.4–1.7m tall, the Javan



PRIMA BAYU/CORBIS

rhino is much smaller than the Indian rhino (in fact much more similar to the black rhino) hence their respective aliases as the Lesser- and Greater one-horned rhino. Like all Asian rhinos, the Javan rhino has also long dagger-shaped lower incisor teeth which are very sharp and used in fighting.

The Javan rhino is largely solitary. The exceptions to this are the affiliation of mother and calf after birth, which may be for as long as two years, and aggregation at mud-wallows and/or salt licks (a small hot spring, where water full of minerals seeps or bubbles out of the ground). Wallowing in mud holes forms a large part of the Javan rhino's day and access to mud wallows is essential for thermo-regulation, skin condition and to remove ectoparasites and biting insects. Based on research carried out in Ujung Kulon, it is thought that males have larger ranges than females (12–20 km² compared to 3–14 km²) and are much more territorial, although there is little evidence these territories are actively defended rather demarked with urine, faeces, scrapes and twisted saplings.

In spite of being the arguably the rarest large mammal on earth and on the brink of extinction, the Javan rhino remains the lesser-known rhino... except for me, and now for you, and soon for everyone that joins in with Javan rhino appeal we're launching in partnership with our friends at the International Rhino Foundation. Read on to learn more and then spread the word!

RPUs have been operating in Ujung Kulon National Park since 1998. Monitoring the presence of Javan rhinos through indirect evidence (footprints, wallows, dung) is a vital part of their work.

SAVE THE RHINO



THERE ARE FEWER THAN 50 JAVAN RHINOS LEFT ON THE PLANET



ALAN COMPOST

There is just **one** viable population of the **Critically Endangered Javan rhinoceros** left

This population is confined to Ujung Kulon National Park on the island of Java, Indonesia (see map, right) and these animals are, quite literally, stuck between a rock and a hard place and extremely vulnerable to extinction. In partnership with the International Rhino Foundation, Save the Rhino is launching an appeal to raise funds for the creation of 4,000 hectares of expanded habitat for Javan rhinos to ultimately allow for the establishment of a second population and hopefully save this species from the brink of extinction.

Endangered species are, by definition, rare. As a consequence, many endangered

species face the problems associated with small population sizes. These problems include a heightened vulnerability to extinction due to natural catastrophes, diseases, poaching and political disturbances; an increased chance of stochastic variation in reproductive and mortality rates leading to extinction; and reduced genetic health as a result of the effects of inbreeding and genetic drift. Unfortunately, because the only viable population is confined to one location, the problems associated with small population sizes are amplified for the Javan rhino.



Of particular concern is the proximity of Ujung Kulon to the active volcano Anak Krakatau. The 1883 eruption of Krakatau decimated Ujung Kulon and its surrounding area. Today the Strombolian eruptions of Anak Krakatau (Child of Krakatoa) provide

(YABI), WWF-Indonesia, the Government of Indonesia and other partners, aims to expand the habitat available to Javan rhinos in Ujung Kulon, thus allowing the population to increase, which in turn would allow for the eventual translocation of some of animals to establish a second population at a separate site. Associated activities include the creation of the necessary infrastructure, staffing and support services to protect and monitor the expanded population, and establishing routine RPU (Rhino Protection Unit) patrolling and monitoring within the extended range to ensure survival of the rhinos and the safety of the overall habitat.

Initial steps in this impressive plan include: clearing the site for an electric fence and adjacent patrol road, constructing small bridges and the electric fence, habitat management such as clearing invasive species and planting rhino food plants, providing for a reliable water supply for wallows, saltlicks, constructing new guard posts, hiring guards and other staff, and socialization work with local communities.

IRF and its partners have already raised \$350,000 of the \$600,000 needed for this ambitious effort. Now we're asking for your help to raise the remaining funds and save the Javan rhino from extinction.

To learn more about the appeal and read the on-the-ground updates, please visit

www.savetherhino.org



DONATE

Online Visit our appeal page at www.justgiving.com/OperationJavanRhino

Telephone Call us during normal office hours (Mon - Fri, 10am - 6pm) on (+44) 020 7357 7474

Post Send a cheque made out to 'Save the Rhino' with 'Operation Javan Rhino' written on the back, to Save the Rhino, 16 Winchester Walk, London SE1 9AQ

Spread the word Even if you cannot donate, please help us by telling friends, family and colleagues about Operation Javan Rhino.

You can also keep up to date with the appeal by becoming a fan of Save the Rhino on Facebook or by following us on Twitter.



Krakatau's eruption in 1883 is among the most violent volcanic events in modern and recorded history.

a reminder of the very real threat of another eruption and the possibility of a resulting tsunami. There is also an ever-present risk of a disease outbreak; indeed, in 1980 there was an outbreak of a disease, possibly anthrax or an anthrax-like disease, which killed at least five animals. With fewer than 50 of the species surviving, that's a major blow.

These risks aside, although the Ujung Kulon population of Javan rhinos is believed to be stable, population growth has stagnated in recent years and the population is suspected to have reached its carrying capacity in the current habitat. Human encroachment and illegal extraction of forest products may, in part, be responsible for this, as may competition with banteng (a species of wild cattle found in Southeast Asia) and reduced availability of suitable food plants, because of the invasion of Arenga palm. The culminating effect is that the population probably cannot grow any larger without intervention.

The International Rhino Foundation, working with Yayasan Badak Indonesia

