

SUMATRAN RHINO (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*)

Species Coordinators: James Doherty, New York Zoological Park
International Studbook Keeper: Thomas Foose, Ph.D., IUCN CBSG

Introduction

In 1985, the New York, Cincinnati, San Diego and Los Angeles Zoos established a cooperative agreement with the Indonesian government. Thus, the Sumatran Rhino Trust and SSP was born to help ensure the survival of this rapidly declining species. Currently, there are four animals in North America with an agreement from the Indonesians to establish breeding groups both in the United States and Indonesia.

Data Table (current through 1 July 1991)

	Two years ago	One year ago	Current year
Participating institutions	4	3	4
Captive Population	5	13	24
# SSP animals managed	0.3	0.3	1.3
# SSP animals not required to meet goals	0	0	0
# animals in non-participant collections but desirable to SSP	-	-	-
Total births in SSP program	0	0	0
# surviving to one year	-	-	-
# of desired births	-	-	-
# of undesired births	-	-	-
# of deaths of SSP animals	0	0	0
# of imports	3	0	1
# of exports	0	0	0
# of founders with represented descendants	-	-	-

Current Population Status

SSP population levels are still quite low as we continue to assemble the breeding nucleus of 10 (5.5) founders. This fall, the male which currently resides with the female in San Diego, will be moved to the Cincinnati Zoo. In the captive population outside of North America, only one birth has occurred in the Malacca Zoo to a female who was captured during pregnancy. This lack of reproduction may be attributable to skewed sex ratios in nearly all the Southeast Asian facilities. Port Lympne in England has 1.1 animals. The female there seems to have experienced an unsuccessful pregnancy but no full-term births have occurred to date. The female in the Jakarta Zoo may be pregnant as a result of a breeding that occurred at the end of 1990.

Demographic Trends

In the last 12 months, field capture has progressed much more smoothly and two additional females are waiting for export to North America. They will arrive in August or September. There is a pressing need to get more males into the North American population.

Population Genetics

The 10 (5.5) founders currently sought for North America are still below an ideal minimum. Eventually, either more founders will be required from the wild or from the captive population outside of North America.

Special Concerns

An important consideration in regard to eventual exchanges is the subspecies issue. Sumatran rhinos are separated into three geographically isolated subspecies from Borneo, Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia. Geographical separation suggests that evolutionary divergence could have taken place. Genetic studies by the New York Zoological Society are currently in progress, specifically to determine whether or not significantly large genetic differences among the subspecies justify their maintenance as separate populations.

Research

An Asian Rhino Conservation Workshop, to be held in Bogor, Indonesia in October 1991, will address research and conservation of the Sumatran and Javan rhinos.

Field Conservation

The survey and salvage operation in Sumatra continues. Poaching is still a serious problem for this species.

Progress Toward Goals

- (1) Three additional animals, including one male, have been captured this year, pushing us beyond the half-way mark for completing our breeding nucleus of ten animals.
- (2) Two rhinos (1.1) are to be transferred from Sumatra to Java for pairing with animals in collections there.

Short-term Goals for Upcoming Year

- (1) Facilitate breeding by all existing females in the SSP population.
- (2) Complete capture and translocation operation in Sumatra.
- (3) Attend and participate in the Asian Rhino Conservation Workshop in Bogor, Indonesia in October 1991.