

SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*)

Species Co-Coordinator:

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Introduction

The Sumatran Rhino SSP and the Sumatran Rhino Trust were brought about to help ensure the survival of this rapidly declining species. In 1985, the Bronx, Cincinnati, San Diego and Los Angeles Zoos established a cooperative agreement with the government of Indonesia. Currently there are four animals (1.3) in North America and an agreement with Indonesia to establish breeding groups, both in the United States and Indonesia.

Data Table (current through 1 July, 1992)

	Two Years ago	One Year ago	Current year
Participating Institutions	4	4	4
Captive Population (Total in world)	19	24	23
# SSP animals managed	0.3	1.3	1.3
# SSP animals not required to meet goals	0	0	0
Total # of births in SSP program	0	0	0
# surviving neonatal period	-	-	-
# of SSP recommended births	-	-	-
# of non recommended births	-	-	-
# of deaths of SSP animals	0	0	2
# of imports	0	1	2
# of exports	-	-	-
# of founders w/ represented descendants	-	-	-

Current Population Status

The SSP population remains low as we continue to assemble the breeding nucleus of ten (5.5) founders. The program was hard hit by the loss of two females in May. The female in the Cincinnati Zoo died after a brief illness despite the heroic efforts of the zoo's staff, advisors and consultants. Later in the month, the female that arrived at the San Diego Zoo last fall died with little warning. These two tragic losses were preceded by the death of the female in Sabah, Malaysia in April. There have not yet been any births to zoo-mated females. This lack of reproduction may be attributable to skewed sex ratios and inability to get breeding age males and females together. The female in the Jakarta Zoo was thought to be pregnant, but this now appears to have been an unsuccessful breeding.

Demographic Trends

In the last 12 months, field capture has progressed. A male and a female were sent to the Taman Safari Park and a female went to the Surabaya Zoo in Indonesia. There are now three (1.2) in the Taman Safari Park and two (1.1) in Surabaya. Two females came to the United States late last year. One of these died in the San Diego Zoo and the other is in the Los Angeles Zoo. A male trapped in March is waiting for export to the United States and the San Diego Zoo.

Population Genetics

The 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 the captive population outside of North America.

Special Concerns

An important consideration in regard to future animal exchanges is the subspecies issue. There are three geographically isolated subspecies from Borneo, Peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra. Genetic studies by the New York Zoological Society are ongoing. DNA sequence data on five rhinos from Sumatra and four from Peninsular Malaysia were compared. Fixed differences were detected making populations diagnosably

distinct. At this time, the data argue for the conservative approach of keeping separate the populations on the Mainland, Sumatra, and Borneo. However, analysis of additional samples (including museum samples) may make it possible to determine whether or not these differences are significant enough to exclude all possibility of inter-population exchanges in future conservation efforts.

Research

A very successful Indonesian Rhino Workshop was held in Bogor, Indonesia in October 1991, addressing management, research and conservation of the Sumatran rhino and Javan rhinos.

Field Conservation

The Sumatran Rhino Trust survey and salvage operation in Sumatra continues. Poaching is still a serious problem for this species. Wildlife authorities in Malaysia have recently reported the confiscation of horns from eight Sumatran rhinos.

Progress toward Goals

- (1) Three rhinos (1,2) were transferred from Sumatra to Java for pairing with animals in collections at the Taman Safari Park and the Surabaya Zoo.
- (2) The male rhino captured this year will help breeding potential in the United States once it arrives in the country.

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.