

Asian Rhino Specialist Group

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The Asian two-horned or Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) occurs more widely in highly scattered and fragmented populations than the other two species of Asian rhino, the great one-horned or Indian rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), and the lesser one-horned or Javan rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*). Most of the known Sumatran rhinos occur in Sumatra and Malaysia and little is known about the status of the population restricted to northern Burma. Sumatra has an estimated population of 420-475 animals, with viable populations in Gunong Leuser, Kerinci Seblat, and Barisan Selatan. Sizeable populations also occur on Peninsular Malaysia in Taman Negara, Endau Rompin, and the forests between Gunung Inas and Ulu Selama. Small but important populations also survive in Sabah, Sarawak, and possibly Kalimantan.

In situ conservation of the Sumatran rhino is faced with many problems for which solutions must be found quickly to ensure survival of the species. There is an acute shortage of manpower to carry out the much-needed day-to-day work in rhino management. Adequate funds are needed for salaries and equipment. Effective legislation is also essential for protection. Ranger stations are needed at strategic places to prevent poaching.

After a great deal of effort, nineteen Sumatran rhinos are now in captivity.

A female that was pregnant at the time of capture gave birth to a baby that has grown to adult size in just three years. A lot of data have been collected from this animal about its growth, diet, and behavior. This knowledge can be used on other births in captivity.

Interest in the Sumatran rhino has increased steadily over the past few years, and many studies are being carried out on the rhinos in captivity. Modern techniques in reproductive technology are being considered in breeding the Sumatran rhino and a studbook has been started.

In Indonesia, the Javan rhino is restricted to the Ujung Kulon National Park, where its numbers increased from about 25 animals in 1967 to 50-54 animals in 1984. A census is being carried out presently to obtain up-to-date information on its numbers. Recently, scattered populations of Javan rhino have been reported in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Efforts are being made for *ex situ* conservation of the Javan rhino in Indonesia with the objective of establishing a second population in the wild. It is believed that the carrying capacity in Ujung Kulon National Park has reached the maximum point for the Javan rhino. *Ex situ* conservation appears to be the only possibility to expand the population rapidly, and thereby arrest the continuing loss of genetic variation.

The need to develop a comprehensive conservation Action Plan for all three species of Asian rhino, in which captive breeding could be set within the overall conservation objectives for each species, led to the production of an Action Plan (published by SSC in 1989). A meeting was held in Bogor in 1989 to discuss both *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of the Javan and Sumatran rhinos. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in 1991.

As a result of the establishment of reserves and other conservation activities, the great one-horned rhinoceros is now considered to be the least threatened of the Asian rhinos. Numbers have increased and the species has been successfully translocated to establish new populations within its former range. The total population is estimated to be more than 1,700 animals, and the Indian and Nepalese authorities deserve much credit for bringing the situation under control.

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Species

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