

Quelle

Datum

**Sumatran rhino**

I read with interest Ilsa Sharp's report "Sumatran rhinos exported to Western zoos" (This Week, 1 August, p 21).

I believe, and so state in my book, *Naturalised Mammals of the World* (to be published by Longmans in September), that the sole justification for keeping wild animals in captivity is for the purpose of breeding endangered



species, with the ultimate intention of returning their offspring to the wild, and that captive-breeding has a valuable role to play in wildlife conservation. The successful reintroduction of the Hawaiian goose or nene to the islands of Hawaii and Maui, and of the Arabian oryx to Arabia, are just two examples in this field.

If, as Ilsa Sharp reports, only solitary rhinos are to be captured, and not those from a potentially viable breeding population, little harm may be done—assuming, of course, that their progeny (if any) are eventually returned to the wild. They will, thereby, be relieved from the pressure of possible poaching. The wide distribution of the remaining stock of a rare animal provides a useful buffer against disease and other calamities. Furthermore, the commitment by the Sumatran

Rhino Trust of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums to spend \$1 million in the first three years of the project, and to provide much-needed technical aid and advice, will be invaluable.

Nevertheless, the future of the Sumatran rhino would be greatly enhanced by the creation in Indonesia and Malaysia of sanctuaries, where the animals and, most importantly, their habitat, could receive full protection. It is at least arguable that solitary animals would be better moved to such sanctuaries than into captivity. This has already been done successfully with the "vulnerable" black rhino in Kenya.

It is much to be hoped that the Malaysian Wildlife Department will give the formation of such sanctuaries their urgent consideration.

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