

OPERATION JAVAN RHINO



BOB CISNEROS

Last year, the International Rhino Foundation and Save the Rhino worked together to run an appeal to raise funds for the creation of 4,000 hectares of extended habitat for Javan rhinos. Through our combined efforts, **the appeal has raised over £30,000 and we're so very grateful to everyone who has donated to the appeal.** What follows is just some of what that money has helped to achieve.

Susie Ellis | Executive Director, International Rhino Foundation

Indonesia's remote Ujung Kulon National Park (UKNP) holds the only viable population of the Critically Endangered Javan rhino. No more than an estimated 44 Javan rhinos remain on the planet. The breeding population of Javan rhinos occupies primarily the western half of UKNP, and thus is susceptible to catastrophic losses from disease or natural disasters. Although the population is believed to be stable, it likely has reached its carrying capacity in the current habitat and probably cannot grow without intervention.

For the past 16 years, Rhino Protection Units have kept the Ujung Kulon population safe from poaching. However, protection isn't enough to save the species from extinction. The population needs to be spread out, with a second viable population established elsewhere in Indonesia. The first step towards accomplishing this goal is to create conditions that will allow the existing population to expand by increasing the habitat available in eastern UKNP (the Gunung Honje area).

Over the past year, IRF, through its implementing partner Yayasan Badak Indonesia and supported by SRI, the Asian Rhino Project, WWF, and other donors, has been working to expand the useable habitat for Javan rhinos in UKNP by creating the 4,000 hectare Javan Rhino Study and Conservation Area (JRSCA).

We are doing this by:

- constructing small bridges, an electric fence and a patrol road;
- eradicating invasive species that have taken over a good portion of the habitat;
- planting rhino food plants; providing a water supply and saltlick;
- constructing additional guard posts.

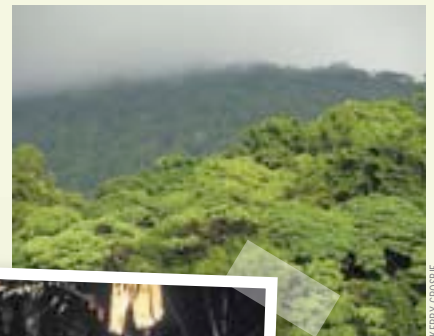
The JRSCA eventually will serve as a 'staging ground' from which translocations to a second site can occur.

As one of the first steps towards establishing the JRSCA, we began working on a plan to relocate families living inside the Park boundaries fairly, so that we can make the area as safe as possible for the rhinos. UKNP authorities successfully

negotiated with people living in the Gunung Honje area and to-date have helped moved 51 families living illegally in the Park. These families agreed to relocate outside Park boundaries, and will be eligible to participate in various job opportunities, possibly to include development of the JRSCA.

Other early steps include building three new guard posts to provide for the security of the area. Construction of the guard posts is underway; one has been completed in the Cilantang area of the Park, the rest will be completed shortly.

At the same time, we are working on constructing a fence on the eastern part of the Park to keep domestic cattle, which carry disease to which rhinos are susceptible, from entering the Park. The fence will also make it easier for biologists and veterinarians to study the rhinos.



WORLD WILDLIFE FUND



RPUS HAVE KEPT THE UJUNG KULON POPULATION SAFE FROM POACHING FOR 16 YEARS

Our next immediate focus will be on restoring good habitat for the rhino in the JRSCA area. Much of the Park has been taken over by the invasive Arenga. The JRSCA area has to be re-zoned as a 'research zone' in order to accommodate our work to eradicate Arenga palm and an environmental risk assessment has been carried out. We are now clearing the palm, and as soon as that is completed, will begin re-planting rhino food plants to attract rhinos to the JRSCA area.

Thanks

Thanks to Stuttgart Zoo for their recent donation of €5,000 and £20,000 from the Aspinall Foundation.