

# REALLY, RHINOS!

Volume 10, no. 3, 1996



# \$3,001!

Thanks to family, friends and even strangers, my Bowling for Rhinos fund raiser was a standing success. I had to send my money in last week and still more keeps coming. I don't know for a while if I was a top money raiser yet. Although I obviously want to win the trip to Africa, I am still blown away by the generosity of so many people and thank you and every one of you again for your support, both financial and spiritual. Am I crazy about this? As long as conservation efforts like the ones printed below are working...NOT!

## Number of greater one-horned rhinos continue to rise

By Dr. M. S. Ghose, 1995, July 1996

Greater one-horned rhino populations are still expanding. Based on estimates given at the December 1995 IUCN Asian rhino Specialist Group meeting, Nepal's rhinos now exceed 500 and India has 1600.

What factors contribute to this rise in rhinos? Demand for the horn in eastern Asia has been falling. Poaching in India decreased by half (1994-95) and in Nepal, no rhinos were known to be poached in 1995. One was poached north of Chitwan in 1995. Both India and Nepal both stepped up their security measures. There is one man per sq km in Kaziranga, the highest concentrations of patrolling effort in the world. With good leadership there has been improved vigilance and more patrols. The Rhino Foundation for Nature in North East India has provided supplies to guards who live in difficult conditions with hazardous duties. Not only has the welfare of the staff been slightly improved, but also that of the people surrounding the park. If local villagers are adequately helped

by park officials, it is less likely that they will aid poachers.

Another factor is better co-operation between the police and range officers. According to Anne Wright of the Rhino Foundation, "India must be one of the few countries in the world which lets rhino poachers out so easily on bail", and this must be rectified through better enforcement of India's Wildlife Act. Rhino poaching in Nepal has been reduced for similar reasons. The police have become more active and unlike in India, the sentences are commonly upheld. Additionally, sentences were increased to a maximum of 15 years in jail and a large fine. Of great importance to the safety of the rhinos is the integrity of the District Forest Officers especially around royal Chitwan National park, because the animals are sometimes poached when they wander into neighboring farmland. The WWF is helping to fund two new anti poaching units inside Chitwan and one more outside the park. Each unit consists of six armed men. There is a similar unit in Royal Bardia National Park also funded by WWF.

As in India, most poachers are caught through informers, and intelligence gathering has been improved recently in Nepal. The International Trust for





Nature Conservation is now paying people on a regular basis to collect information as well as giving reward money (raised from individual donors and a collection at Chitwan).

Though higher budgets have been allocated to improve park management in India, more financial aid must be given to the neighboring villagers because rhinos damage crops and even kill people. Success should not fall prey to complacency. In Assam, nine rhinos were killed in Orang Wildlife Sanctuary in 1995 due to mismanagement and lack of adequate patrols. In Manas National Park there are presently only 20 out of 90 rhinos left due to political disturbance in the area. According to Deb Roy, formerly Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Assam, "The rhinos will be gone in 25 years if there is not the political will to save them". The same exists for Nepal now that the King, a supporter of rhinos, no longer has so much power with the advent of multiparty democracy.

Rhinos can be saved if adequate funds are provided for their protection and if there is effective leadership in the field: the situation in both India and Nepal has improved and will continue to do so in the future as long as there is significant support from senior politicians and bureaucrats and YOU!

## *New breed of shooters hunts the endangered Javan rhinoceros*

Timothy Dwyer/United Press International, April 11, 1996, A-20

A hundred years ago Europeans came to Ujung Kulon, an isolated peninsula on the tip of Java to hunt endangered Javan rhinos. Today, increasing numbers of tourists come to shoot the shy beast, not with a gun but with a camera.

Park rangers estimate only about 60 rhinos still live in the thick undergrowth of the park that 60 years ago was a game reserve and, in 1992, was declared along with the Komodo Islands, one of Indonesia's first world Heritage areas.\* Rangers say there is no evidence of poaching of the rhino, which fetches a high price in the illegal wildlife trade.

A new breed of eco-tourists trek below the lush and humid jungle canopy in hopes of seeing a rhino even though the chances of actually seeing one is slight. "It's very difficult to see a rhino," Sumanta, a forest guide who has worked in the Ujung Kulon park for 31 years, said recently while guiding visitors on a jungle hike. "You need to spend much time, at least a month, here, to be sure of success."

Ironically, in the 18th century rhinos were so numerous and damaging to plantations in Java that the government paid money to have them killed;



500 were bagged within two years. Despite its proximity to a big population center (the most densely populated island on Earth), official figures show only about 3,000 people stayed overnight last year on Peucang Island. conservationists say one of the reasons Ujung Kulon remains an untouched island of wilderness on Java is the 1883 eruption of the Krakatoa volcano.

The rhino is just one jewel in a sparkling crown of natural wealth only 124 miles from Indonesia's heavily polluted capital of Jakarta. The 296,520-acre park, which includes a number of islands, is also home to five species of primates, of which three are endemic to Java, and the endangered Javan wild dog. Population pressures remains one of the greatest threats to the park as people living in adjacent villages violate the park to cultivate crops, gather wood and hunt animals.

\* It is reported that Javan rhinos have been sighted in Vietnam.