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in the oriental market, is considered to have magic medicinal qualities.

The population in India at the moment seems fairly stable with a slight increase occurring. However, this situation is totally dependent on local support and politics. It could change overnight, therefore, the Indian rhinoceros must be considered an endangered species slightly improving in numbers but severely threatened nonetheless.

The Javan rhinoceros was formerly found throughout southeast Asia but is now reduced to one small area in West Java, the Ujung Kulon Reserve, with possibly another small group along the Laos-Cambodia border. The population numbers probably 60 - 80 animals. Its main downfall has been the wanton destruction by man of the animal as well as its habitat.

Much lighter in build and smaller in size than the Indian rhinoceros, it has a similar arrangement of skin flaps as seen in the Indian rhinoceros but does not have the heavy tubercles. Instead, there is a different mosaic pattern to the skin. Javan bulls stand 1.2 meters at the shoulder. The Javan lives in deep, tropical rainforests and is secretive in habit. It has never been shown in captivity in the United States and



An Indian rhinoceros in Jaldapara, West Bengal. (Photo by Michael Dee)

only rarely elsewhere. Its future, as in all the Asiatic rhinoceros, is in grave jeopardy. The only place where the Javan's numbers are increasing is in the Ujung Kulon Reserve. This could pose a problem as the space on the reserve is limited not allowing for growth.

The Sumatran rhinoceros (first described in 1793) is the smallest of the world's existing rhinos. Unlike the other Asiatic rhinoceros, it possesses two horns instead of one. Its height is approximately 1.1 - 1.3 meters at the shoulder. Found in the swampy lowlands of Indonesia and southeast Asia, the Sumatran rhino numbers no more than 150-300 left in the wild.

Oddly enough in the mid 1880's and 1890's it was not uncommon in captivity. Only three have ever been shown in the United States. In recent times only two have made their way to Europe, and the last one died in a zoo in Copenhagen in 1972. This animal, a female, was captured in Sumatra in 1959. Ironically, the Sumatran was one of the earliest rhinos to give birth in captivity. A female delivered a calf while being unloaded at the London docks in 1872, but the calf lived only three days.

The Sumatran rhinoceros is extremely endangered and even though it is spread over a wide range and found in remote isolated pockets, the value of the animal and its products place it in peril. There is now some consideration being given to bringing a handful of examples into captivity to breed them as a safeguard against total and complete destruction in the wild.

At a conference of zoo directors and naturalists held in London in August of this year, the question of how the efforts of zoos should be expended in the future to save the rhinoceros of the world was addressed. All in all, the future for all of the rhinos with the exception of the southern white rhinoceros, is bleak at best; but perhaps, in time, we can save what is left.

THE RHINO'S HORN



What once was a natural work of art on the rhino . . . becomes an unnatural work of art in the hands of unfeeling individuals.

All rhinoceros have a horn on the upper part of their nose, some even possess two horns. The horns are not true horns but rather a material more akin to fingernails, fibrous in nature and held en masse by a cementing substance. The horn itself sets on a roughened mound of bone on the skull and there is no bony connection.

Two rhinoceros, battering away at each other, could easily knock off each other's horns. If the underlying tissue is not damaged it will simply regenerate.

The rhino's horn has been part of the bane of his existence for a long time. It was thought to have medicinal properties, which is superstitious nonsense. It was thought to have the properties of a powerful aphrodisiac, which of course is not true. It became a manner of ritual symbolism having to do with male identification; hence, it was sought after. It still is sought as handles for daggers in the Middle East. No

matter which way it is used, it comes at a very dear price.

Rhinoceros horns cost around \$500+ per ounce in some markets. Dagger handles in Yemen made from rhinoceros horns are sold for \$300 - \$13,000 apiece. The rhinoceros horn has also been used as an antidote for poisons. It was an oriental superstition that if an individual drank from a cup fashioned from rhino horn, they would not be poisoned. One school of thought said that the poison would be absorbed and neutralized by the horn. Others thought that any poisons placed in the cup would boil and effervesce warning the owner not to drink.

The rhinoceros horn has also been fashioned as an object of art. In the hands of a skilled artisan it can be crafted into very handsome forms giving it the look of amber.

Regardless of how it is used, whenever it is utilized by man it means that a rhinoceros has to die first . . . just one more reason for the demise of these magnificent beasts.