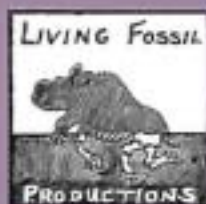


# Hairy Rhino's Gift of Story and Dance

for the Children of Sumatra and Malaysia



*A Children's Book for the Hairy Rhinoceros*  
by Robin William Radcliffe

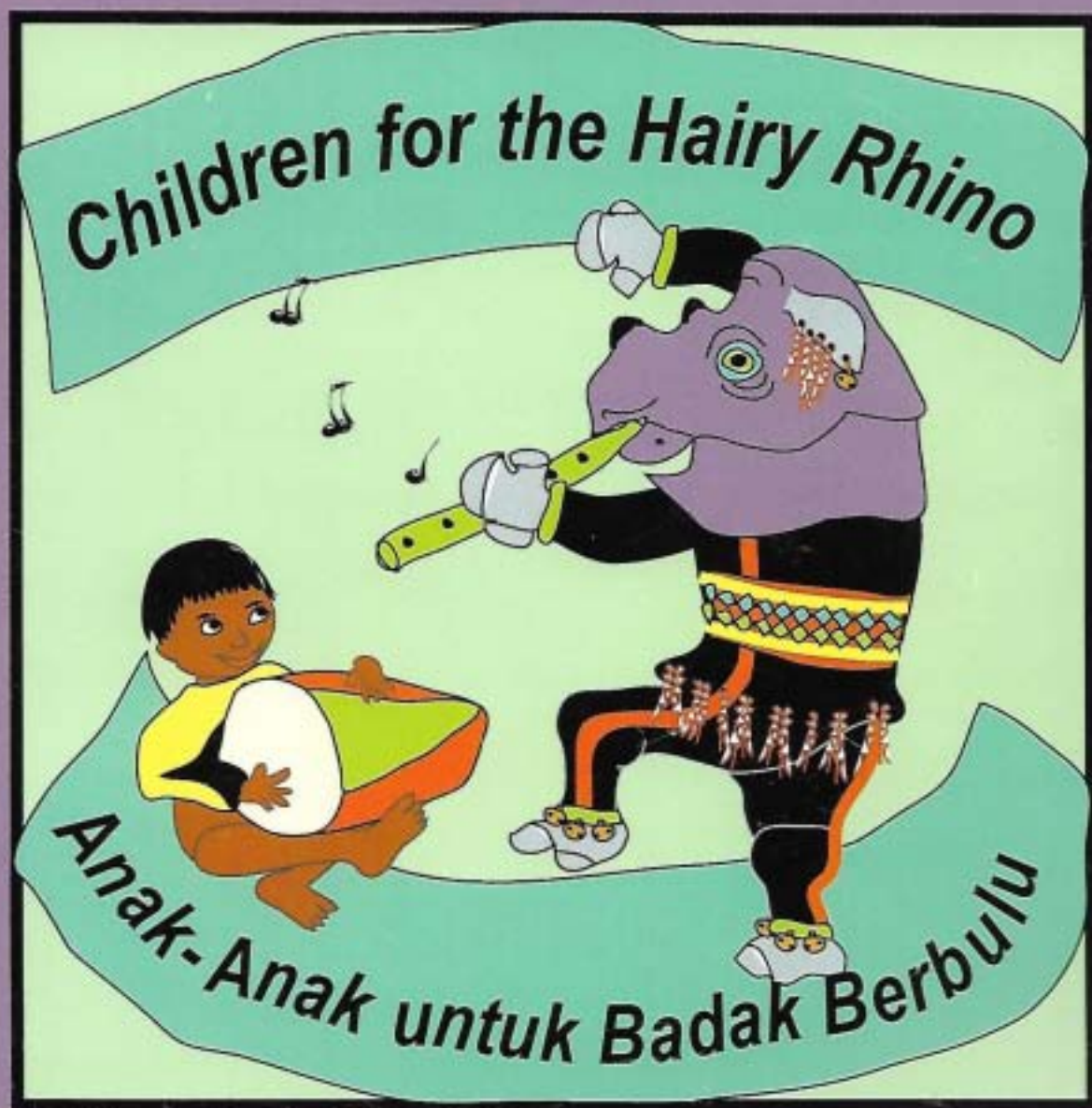
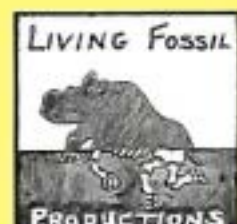
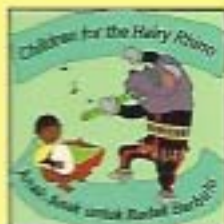


Figure 1. Project logo for *A Children's Book for the Hairy Rhinoceros*.

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### *Project Summary*

This project update summarizes findings of a four-month (January to May of 2005) information gathering expedition to Sumatra for the purpose of "testing" the children's book, defining logistics of book distribution, and developing the education program. Feedback from the Sumatra field experience stemmed from consultation and discussion with local colleagues, teachers, village heads and children - a process that has helped to further define and characterize project goals. Three primary objectives were specifically identified as fundamental to success of the *Hairy Rhino Children's Book Project*:

**Objective One: *Test the Children's Book In Situ***

**Objective Two: *Define a Book Distribution Plan for SE Asia***

**Objective Three: *Develop an Education Program for the Book***

### *Statement of Urgency and Need for Action*

The Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) or "hairy rhino" is listed on the IUCN'S (World Conservation Union) CITES Appendix 1, making it among the most endangered large mammals on earth. The population decline of this rare forest rhino, from several thousand two decades ago to less than three hundred today, is a result of poaching for the rhino's horn (for use in traditional Asian medicines) and habitat fragmentation brought on by an ever-expanding human population. Sadly, all of this has happened while its homeland's children remain unaware of the existence of their own hairy rhinoceros!

The urgency of the hairy rhino's fate is compounded by two significant challenges. First, is this surprising paucity of knowledge within local children that such a creature even lives in their country. Perhaps if the rhinoceros or *badak* were prominently portrayed on the nation's emblem (as is the Indonesian eagle) this gap in knowledge would not exist. However, as fate has it the hairy rhinoceros is a rare and secretive forest mammal that is rarely encountered by people, except those actively involved in its demise by poaching. Second, for those people who do know of their own rhinoceros, the word *badak* – not unlike the wolf in European literature – carries with it a burden of negative connotation. *Muka Badak* literally translates as "Rhino Face" and is used derogatorily to describe an obstinate person of rhino-like stubbornness. Likewise, the Indonesian dictionary gives *badak*: *he is so thick-skinned he does not know shame*. While just an expression, it does impart the hairy rhinoceros as something it most certainly is not – a mean tempered beast not worthy of saving.

Snares are the most common tools used by poachers to illegally kill Sumatran rhinos for their horns in Southeast Asia. Snaring is a relatively simple technique for which the materials are plentiful and locally available. People will continue to set snares until alternatives to the ancient tradition of using rhino horn for medicine are widely practiced, a lifestyle change that will require new ideas from new generations in our rapidly changing world. The children of Sumatra and Malaysia represent this future. Through goals and objectives outlined in greater detail herewith, the *Hairy Rhinoceros Children's Book Project* hopes to secure positive change for the future of the Sumatran rhinoceros and for its closest friend and ally, the peoples of Southeast Asia.



## *Snares and the Sumatran Rhinoceros*



**Figure 2.** Entrapped by a poacher's snare, this Sumatran rhinoceros was discovered alive in 2001 by Rhino Protection Unit rangers in Sumatra's Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park. Sadly, veterinary medical assistance arrived at the scene only after the animal had succumbed to its injuries.



**Figure 3.** Snaring is the primary method poachers use to illegally kill endangered Sumatran rhinos inside their protected rainforest homes.





**Figure 4.** Snares such as the one that killed this rhinoceros are constructed of local materials and set in areas frequented by the Sumatran rhino where they follow well-trodden trails in the rainforest.



**Figure 5.** Rhino horn is coveted in traditional eastern Asian medicines, a market that creates demand for rhino horn and incentive for poachers in Southeast Asia. An informed population may help curtail this trade.



### **Objective One: Test the Children's Book In Situ**

The text and illustrations for *The Hornless Rhinoceros* (Indonesian translation) were "tested" locally by reviewing the story with children and teachers in schools surrounding Way Kambas National Park, Lampung Province Sumatra. Several changes will be made to the story based on this process (see revised draft of *The Hornless Rhinoceros*). Our first school visit was to the National Elementary School (Sekolah Dasar Negeri) located outside Way Kambas National Park. One hundred and ten school children ranging in age from ten to thirteen years from Grades 4, 5 and 6 were present. One gifted child, named Ika, was chosen from the class to read the story aloud to the rest of the students. Ika did a wonderful job. Following the story telling, several children from the class volunteered to come forward and tell in their own words what the story and its characters meant to them. Five children spoke about *The Hornless Rhinoceros* children's book:

- All of the children said that rhino horn ("bercula" in Indonesian and "bersumbu" in Malay) has **No magical powers** or use as medicine and that Junaidi must help his father learn about the rhinoceros. This core message came through clearly in the Indonesian translation of the story and was the idea each student talked about most. The children were eager with anticipation as we shared the colorful illustrations and talked about the hairy rhino and its natural history.
- With respect to making medications, Asian people often boil an item (such as the horn) and then drink the "tea" from it or they take a piece of the horn and pulverize it and mix the powder with a liquid to drink as medication. It would be very strange for a father to give the whole horn to the child to eat. Therefore, the story was changed to reflect this practice.
- The name Bulu, from the rhino character in *The Hornless Rhinoceros* story, proved memorable since its origin comes from the Indonesian and Malay word, berbulu, meaning "hairy". Indeed, it is the Sumatran rhino's own hair that makes it unique among the other living species of rhinoceros. Junaidi was also considered an appropriate name for a young boy from Southeast Asia because Sumatra and Malaysia represent a "melting pot" of different cultures. The origin of Junaidi is thought to come from West Java, the last home of Indonesia's other rare forest rhino the Javan rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*).
- Although poisonous frogs are found in Southeast Asia, their venom is not used by forest people to tip "poison arrows", as is the custom in some South American tribes. Therefore, this reference was removed from the story and replaced by a more graphic depiction of the colorful amphibians as "blue-jeans" frogs.
- Remarkably, not a single child in the group had ever heard of a rhinoceros prior to our visit. Considering the village's close proximity to the Sumatran Rhinoceros Sanctuary and National Park, this was astonishing; however, children do not visit the captive rhinos at the sanctuary (although there are plans to offer education programs) and wild rhinos (badak) live secretive lives in the forest and are rarely encountered. In contrast, every child knew about the elephant (gajah) and the tiger (harimau) because these animals come into regular contact with villagers in this rural farming region of Sumatra – mainly through conflict with "crop-raiding" elephants or by depiction of tigers in traditional Indonesian dance ceremonies, respectively. A similar total unfamiliarity for a forest rhino was encountered with Malay children, an experience that gave rise to the author's idea of *A Children's Book for the Hairy Rhinoceros*.

## *School Visit for Testing Children's Story*



**Figure 6.** "Ika", a 12 year-old Indonesian girl in Grade 5 reading *The Hornless Rhinoceros* children's story aloud to the class.



**Figure 7.** "Ika" reading the Indonesian story before her classmates.



## **Objective Two: Define a Book Distribution Plan for SE Asia**

With nearly 40 million people on the island of Sumatra alone, it would be unrealistic to propose donation of the book to all school-age children. Even if restricted to all children living in and around key Sumatran rhino areas, the numbers are still beyond the scope of this project. Based on consultation with Dr. Philip Nyhus and feedback from local Indonesian and Malaysian colleagues, a strategy has emerged for ensuring that book distribution becomes an effective conservation tool, thereby fulfilling our project's most fundamental goal of rhino and rainforest preservation:

### *I. Coordinate via Village Heads and Rhino Protection Units:*

It will be critical to follow established communication networks and honor cultural sensitivities during all book distribution and educational programs. Therefore, education activities will be coordinated through the Regency head (Kecamatan) who will then write letters of invitation to village heads (Kepala desa) on behalf of the education team. Book distribution will be conducted in collaboration with the Rhino Protection Units in each National Park since their involvement in village outreach programs will be essential to long-term program success.

### *II. Criteria for Selection of Villages for Book Donation:*

The primary target group for book distribution will be schools located adjacent to Sumatran Rhino Protected Areas in Indonesia and Malaysia. For example, surrounding Way Kambas National Park in Southeast Sumatra 37 schools in villages (kampung) border the park and interact with the park ecosystem. One classroom of children (class to be chosen by the village head or school principal) and each school library will receive copies of the book as part of a comprehensive *Rhino and Rainforest Day* devoted to rhinoceros and rainforest preservation (see details of education program on following pages). Villages surrounding four critical Rhinoceros Protected Areas each in Indonesia and Malaysia will be targeted. The communities and quantity of books designated for each Rhino Protected Area were chosen based on the following criteria:

#### *Criteria One*

The geographic proximity of each village to the Rhino Protected Area will determine priority for book donation; villages most closely associated with the park represent the greatest chance of making a significant impact with the book project.

#### *Criteria Two*

The quantity of books for distribution in Indonesia and Malaysia was based primarily on estimated wild rhino population size together with assessment of local human density; those areas with the most surviving hairy rhinoceros will receive more books than those where only a handful remain.

### *III. Target Eight Rhino Protected Areas (Four each in Indonesia and Malaysia):*

The subsequent maps illustrate the historic and current distribution of the Sumatran rhinoceros in Southeast Asia with the largest populations remaining on the island of Sumatra and peninsular Malaysia. In addition, a remnant population still exists in Sabah Malaysia on the island of Borneo. Four critical Rhinoceros Protected Areas and the villages most closely linked with each park have been identified in Indonesia and Malaysia, respectively. The quantity of children's books to be distributed to the villages of each Rhino Protected Area is summarized in the maps that follow.

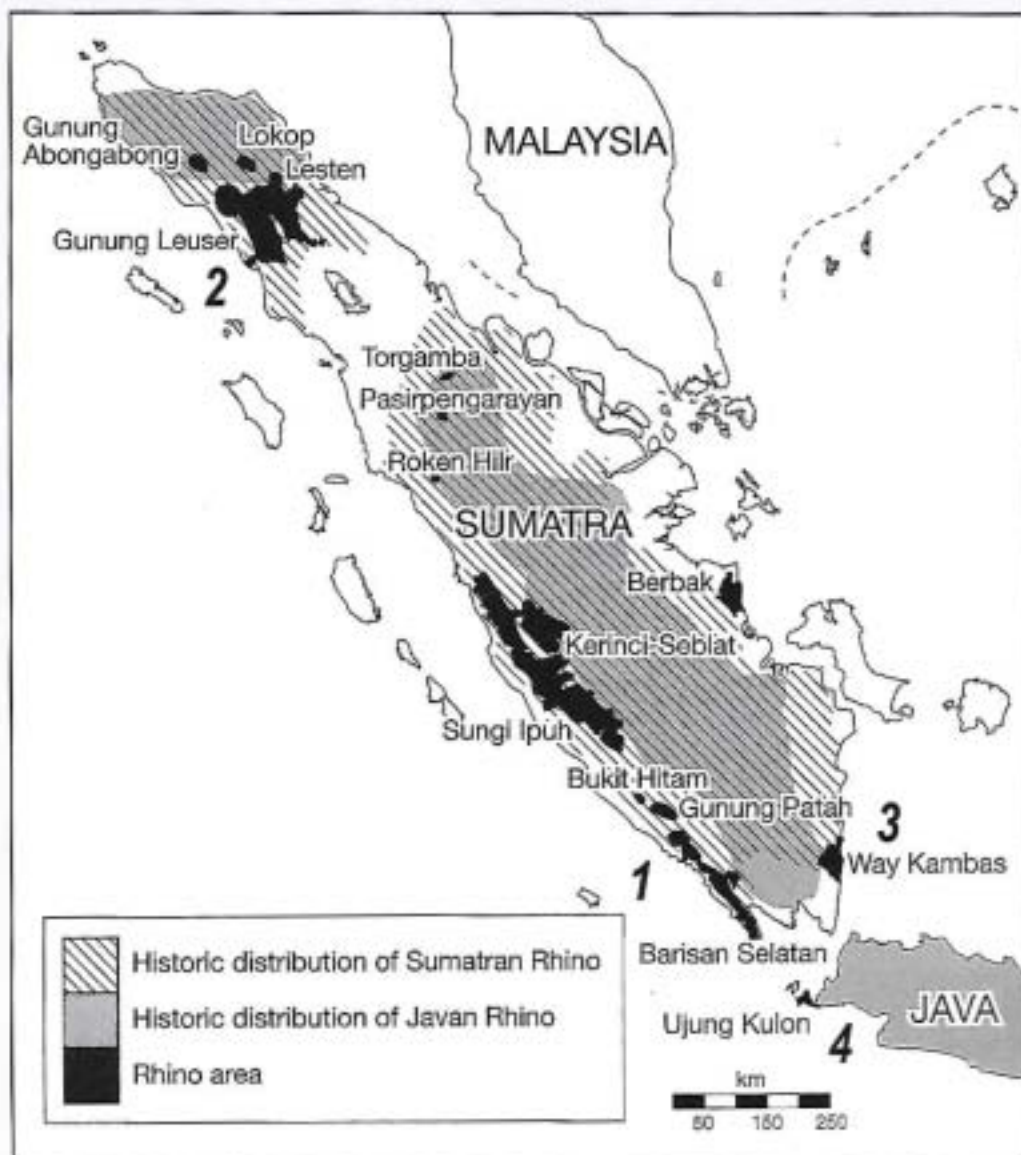


**RHINO PROTECTED AREA**  
INDONESIA

**BOOKS FOR DISTRIBUTION**  
6,000 books\*

<b>Bukit Barisan / Kerinci-Seblat National Parks (Map #1)</b> Lampung Province / Bengkulu Province, Sumatra: 50 villages	2,000 books
<b>Gunung Leuser National Park (Map #2)</b> North Sumatra Province and Aceh Province, Sumatra: 37 villages	1,500 books
<b>Way Kambas National Park (Map #3)</b> Lampung Province, Sumatra: 37 villages	1,500 books
<b>Ujung Kulon National Park (Javan Rhino; Map #4)</b> Banten Province, Java: 25 villages	1,000 books

\*Each village school will receive approximately 40 books in Bahasa Indonesian/English. This represents enough books for one class of school children in each of an estimated 150 villages near Rhino Protected Areas in Indonesia plus extra copies for each library.



**Figure 8.** A map of Sumatra and West Java with sites identified for book donation (adapted from IUCN/SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan).

**RHINO PROTECTED AREA  
MALAYSIA**

**BOOKS FOR DISTRIBUTION**

4,000 books\*

**Tabin Wildlife Reserve (Borneo; Map #1)**

1,000 books

Sabah, Malaysia: 25 villages

**Royal Belum Forest Complex (Map #3,4)**

1,000 books

Perak and Kelantan States, Malaysia: 25 villages

**Taman Negara Forest Complex (Map #5,6,7)**

1,500 books

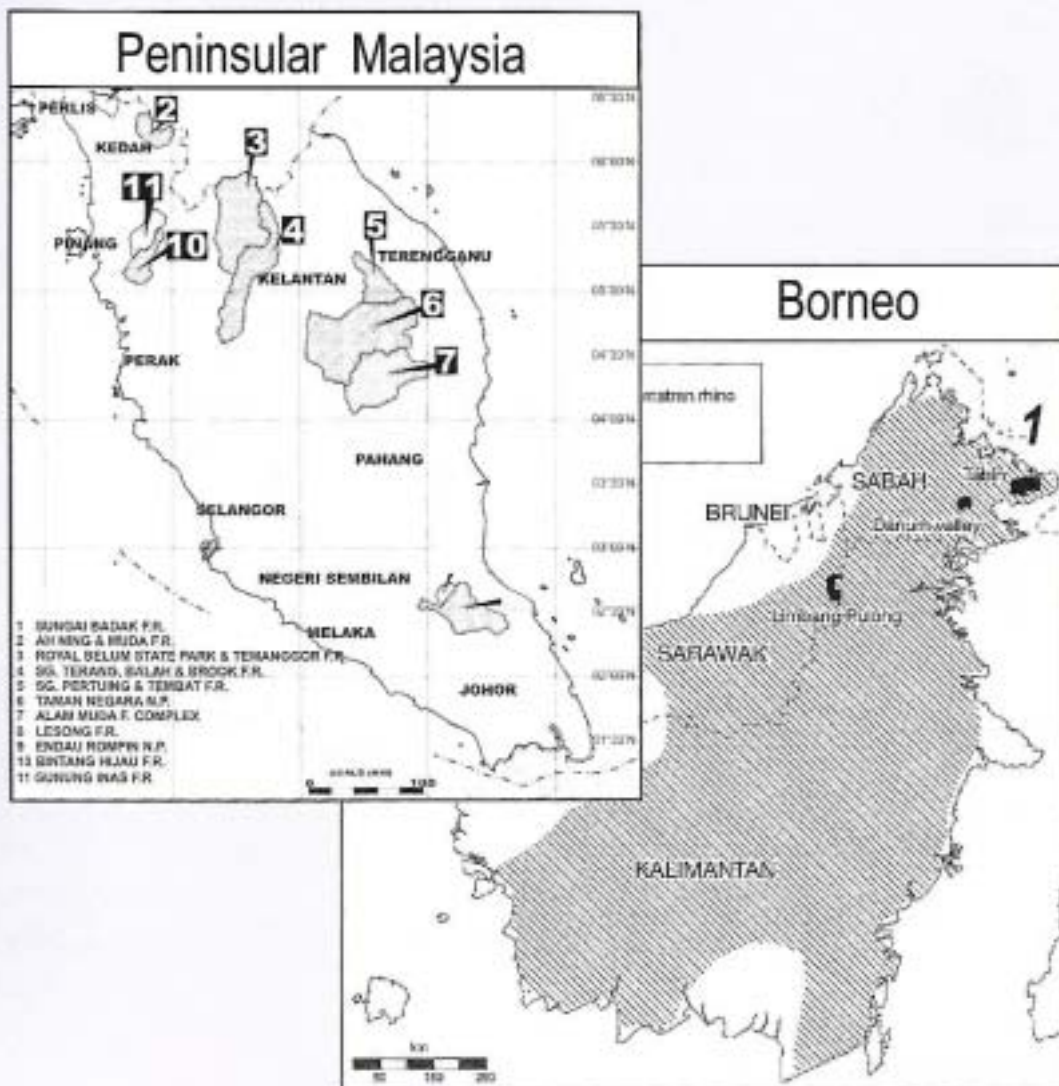
Terengganu State, Malaysia: 37 villages

**Bintang Hijau and Gunung Inas Forest Reserves (Map #2, 10,11)**

500 books

Perak and Kedah States, Malaysia: 13 villages

\*Each village school will receive approximately 40 books in Bahasa Malay/English. This represents enough books for one class of school children in each of an estimated 100 villages near Rhino Protected Areas in Malaysia plus extra copies for each school library.



**Figure 9.** Map of peninsular Malaysia and Borneo with sites identified for book donation (adapted from IUCN/SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan).





Ikuti kisah seorang kanak-kanak Melayu bernama Junaidi mengembara ke dalam hutan beriklim Asia untuk membantu badak sumbu berbulu dan kawan-kawannya yang hidup liar di hutan membongkar rahsia hutan yang tersembunyi. Di dalam kisah ini, **Badak Tidak Bersumbu**, seekor anak badak telah kehilangan sumbuanya tetapi azamnya tetap kuat. Begala misteri jauh tersembunyi di sini. Bertulah Junaidi untuk belajar buat kali pertama dan selamanya tentang kisah sebenar mengenai badak dan sumbuanya – sumbu badak **TIDAK** menyimpan sebarang keajaiban.

Follow a Malay boy named Junaidi into the steamy forests of Asia as he helps the hairy rhino and his wild friends uncover a hidden jungle secret. In this original tale, **The Hornless Rhinoceros**, a young rhino loses his horn but not his purpose. Mysteries lie deep here. Help Junaidi learn once and for all the truth about the rhinoceros and his horn – the horn of a rhino holds **NO** magic.

# The Hornless Rhinoceros Badak Tidak Bersumbu

A Children's Book for the Hairy Rhinoceros  
Sebuah Buku Kanak-Kanak Mengenai Badak Sumbu Berbulu



Story and Illustrations by  
Centa dan Austrasi oleh

Robin William Radcliffe



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825 Spinnaker Road  
Ithaca, NY 14850

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rhinodocor@yahoo.com



Figure 10. The Rhino Postcard in Bahasa Malay for circulation on *Rhino and Rainforest Day*. A similar version will be translated into Bahasa Indonesian for distribution in Sumatra and West Java as a prelude to book donation.

### Objective Three: Develop an Education Program for the Book

The education program will focus on forging ties between local communities and the Sumatran rhino within its rainforest home. The rhinoceros will be used as a focal point to convey the much broader message of rainforest preservation by showing the natural history of the rhino as it relates to other creatures and the jungle. Specifically we will plan a *Rhino and Rainforest Day* in each National Park region for the purpose of raising awareness about the hairy rhinoceros in adults and children alike as a prelude to book donation. For each Rhino Protected Area we will accomplish our educational goals in two phases:

*Phase One: Rhino and Rainforest Day*

*Phase Two: Story Telling and Book Donation with Bulu*



### **Phase One: Rhino and Rainforest Day**

Tying closely to the theme of the children's book, our goal will be to introduce the hairy rhino to the people surrounding each protected area through the medium of dance. The focus of the *Rhino and Rainforest Day* will be a traditional children's dance celebration performed by local Asian dancers and musicians (featuring a handmade badak dance costume and other rainforest creatures including the blue-jeans frog and pop-eyed papaya bat from the story). In this way, we will respectfully convey our conservation message by incorporating elements of *The Hornless Rhinoceros* story into the dance. Indonesian and Malaysian dance represents a magical and traditional way of sharing important moral and ethical values and remains essential to fostering community bonds. Especially critical in today's rapidly changing society where western influences are eliminating many of these irreplaceable ways of life, traditional dance remains a highly respected art form and means of communication in Indonesian and Malaysian culture. While traditional dances incorporating such rainforest animals as tigers and sun bears are known from Sumatra, there has never been a dance celebration for the rhinoceros, thus making ours the first ever proposed Rhino Dance! Together with resident artists and musicians, we will perform one rhino & rainforest dance celebration for each Rhino Protected Area and circulate the Rhino Postcard. Donation of *The Hornless Rhinoceros* children's book will follow as outlined in *Phase Two*.



Figure 11. Bulu the hairy rhino celebrating with children and parents in Way Kambas Village, Sumatra during the first "Rhino Dance".



### **Phase Two: Story Telling and Book Donation with Bulu**

Following the *Rhino and Rainforest Day* celebration, the children's book will be donated to each school representing those villages previously identified as being most closely connected with the park. Each school will receive the children's book accompanied by a slide and video presentation about the natural history of the Sumatran rhinoceros as narrated by *Bulu*. See **Objective Two** for details of geographic book distribution in Indonesia and Malaysia. The idea will be to donate enough books for one classroom of children. Approximately 40 books will be distributed to each school to be incorporated into the class curriculum (average class size in Sumatra is 30 children). Therefore, each year the book would be used by a new class as part of the project's mission to teach children about the rhino and the rainforest. Each classroom teacher will be given instruction on basic rhino biology so that these lessons can be continued year to year. Children's activity books and an animated video CD archiving a brief synopsis of hairy rhino life in the rainforest (i.e. browsing, wallowing, foraging for fruits, etc.) will be donated to each school to facilitate this goal.

In this way, the book and its conservation message will reach a much greater number of children than if it were delivered to households alone, a number that would rise as time goes on. Children will also be encouraged to take the book home and share it with their families. Therefore, the children's book – a number far beyond the books available for distribution – will reach the greatest number of children and adults. For example, if 250 schools are targeted for book distribution with 10,000 copies distributed throughout Southeast Asia, an estimated 50,000 children will be exposed to the book over a five-year period. Conceivably, it could easily be double this number or more (i.e. 100,000 plus) if the book reaches both schools and families. Soon a whole new generation of people may become stewards of the hairy rhino and its rainforest home.



**Figure 12.** *Bulu* meets with school children from Grades 1 through 6 at the Sekolah Dasar Negeri Elementary School near Way Kambas National Park.





**Figure 13.** Children of Sumatra meet *Bulu* the hairy rhino near Way Kambas National Park in Indonesia.



In order to accomplish target objectives, the conservation education team will include a diverse group of people. The rhino keepers at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas National Park are all accomplished traditional dancers and are excited by the opportunity to share their knowledge of these rare rhinos and their rainforest home with the children of Southeast Asia through the medium of story and dance. The Education Program Advisors are Dr. Philip Nyhus and Dr. Thomas Foose.

### ***Indonesia Team***

Robin W. Radcliffe	Project Leader
Rolfe & Mopane Radcliffe	Project Co-Leaders, Living Fossil Productions
Nico van Strien	Indonesia Coordinator
Sarno	Traditional Indonesian Dancer with Rhino (Badak) Costume from Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, Way Kambas National Park (WKNP)
Dedi Candra	Project Veterinarian, Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, WKNP
Marcellus Adi	Site Manager, Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, WKNP
Local Musicians	Drummers, Players of Gongs, Chimes and Flutes

### ***Malaysia Team***

Robin W. Radcliffe	Project Leader
Rolfe & Mopane Radcliffe	Project Co-Leaders, Living Fossil Productions
Mohd Khan Momin Khan	Malaysia Coordinator
Sarno	Traditional Indonesian Dancer with Rhino (Badak) Costume and Rhino Keeper at Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, WKNP
Abdul Kadir Abu Hashin	Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) Coordinator, Malaysia Dept. of Wildlife and National Parks
Dedi Candra	Project Veterinarian, Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, WKNP
Local Musicians	Drummers, Players of Gongs, Chimes and Flutes

Additional Coworkers not identified in original Rolex Application RAE #2006-100:

Drs. Dedi Candra and Marcellus Adi  
Curator and Site Manager of Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary  
Suaka Rhino Sumatera  
Taman Nasional Way Kambas  
Lampung, Indonesia  
Office Phone: +62-82-721 0197  
Hand Phone: +62-812-815 2881  
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And the Rhino Keepers, Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, Way Kambas National Park:

Sarno, Lamijo, Dede, Yuhadi, Sunarto, Surono, Rois, Suratno, Sugiono, Rakimin

# LIPSUS KEHUTANAN

## Menhut Cek Kerusakan Huta



BANDAR LAMPUNG  
Departemen Kehutanan

Perencanaan dan pelaksanaan  
di Menteri Kehutanan se-  
dua hari kunjungan kerja  
Lampung. Hari ini, Menteri  
pejabat urusan Departemen  
tuntut mengkritik nilai sber-  
ting kehutanan di Hutan Sa-  
Bandar Lampung, yang di-  
Hutan Urutan Gaseung di-  
kerja sama dengan Dinas  
tanas Lampung.

Mengemukakan hal sena  
dalam pertijilannya itu M  
didampingi antara lain oleh  
lindungan Hutan dari Koro  
Alan, Kepala Badan Pele-  
Boen Purnama, staf ahli S  
Gubernur Lampung, Sidi-  
Z.P. dan Kepala Dinas Keh  
Lampung Arinal Djumali.

Rombongan lebih dulu  
cek kawasan hutan pro-  
daerah Gedung Wani (8  
40) Kemadim, bergeser  
kawasan hutan berhutan  
Blah (Kategori 3B) yang  
rusak akibat perambahan,  
berjajak meninjau area  
di daerah Labuhan Mar-  
Rombongan setempat.

di Taman Nasional Way  
untuk melihat pusat pele-  
jah, serta potensi penangk-  
jah dan badak. "Kami di-  
upaya meningkatkan bi-  
manca yang terdapat di li-  
masuk ditangkal di se-  
Mentah.

Melihat potensi hutan  
Kambas, Menteri juga

**LESTARIKAN HUTAN.** Seorang pengelola Taman Nasional Way Kambas (TNWK) memakai kostum badak Sumatera dan menyebarkan bingkisan pada Menteri Kehutanan M.S. Kaban di areal taman wisata Way Kambas, Senin (18-4). Menhut juga berharap masyarakat Lampung tetap melestarikan hutan walaupun kondisi kini tinggal 40% dari 462.030 hektare.

Penangkaran Badak

**M.S. Kaban Janji Bantu Kejel**

**Figure 14.** "Butu" greets the Indonesian Minister of Forestry as the Minister learns more about the *Hairy Rhino Children's Book Project* during a recent visit to the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas National Park, Lampung Province, Sumatra.



## **EXCERPT FROM SUMATRA FIELD JOURNAL**

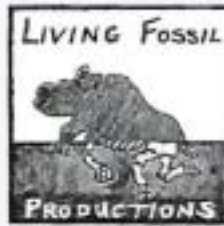
Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, Way Kambas National Park, Lampung Province, Sumatra

*17th of April, Sunday*

Way Kambas National Park is situated in some of the last lowland rainforest left in Sumatra. As such, the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary could make lasting contributions to local people by providing experiences for adults and children alike in the form of education programs and encounters with wildlife and forest ecology. About 80% of the people surrounding Way Kambas still earn a living from the land in some form (primarily agriculture), but finding sustainable ways to do so lies at the heart of its long-term protection if we are to conserve even a small part of this place in the face of growing human demand for resources. In anticipation of the forthcoming *Hairy Rhino Children's Book*, the first rhino dance celebrations recently took place in villages surrounding Way Kambas National Park to raise awareness about the rhino and the rainforest.

I have come away from this experience with an enduring love for Indonesia; its people, history and most of all its amazing biodiversity have left a lifelong impression. Of all places on earth, I cannot think of a region with more astonishing and indeed often bizarre life forms. From long-necked beetles to 9-inch walking sticks the diameter of your finger, the most dazzling hornbills and kingfishers to giant red flying squirrels with a wingspan of more than a meter (these creatures glide 100 meters or more and apparently can live an entire lifetime without ever touching the ground!) to some of the most amazing plants in the world. The giant Rafflesia flower is perhaps the most spectacular. As the world's largest flower it symbolizes the remarkable life forms this region holds. Yet as a nation of islands, Indonesia now faces imminent peril - largely because these organisms all share "endemism" or unique biota found nowhere else on earth. Much attention has been given to biodiversity these days, but I don't believe the importance of preserving the diversity of such systems can be overstated. Not just as token remnants analogous to a zoological ark, but truly intact ecosystems deserving of our utmost care and protection.

Perhaps the most enduring impression of my time in Sumatra is the important role that local people **MUST** play in conservation. Many people believe that if we save a specie's genetic code that we will save the animal from extinction. Such a greater fallacy could not be orchestrated! I would like to suggest that perhaps the last hope for the Sumatran rhino (and many other species today) lies not in any zoo where high tech procedures capture the attention of well-intentioned donors, but rather in the villages and town meeting halls across Indonesia and the globe. These are where decisions will be forged about land use, resource management, laws and enforcement that will shape the region's future and our own. In addition - and of growing interest to me - is that this is also where the children will form lasting impressions about what the forest and its life mean to them, beliefs and values that will stay with families for generations to come and form the basis of a future land ethic. This is at the heart of why I believe education of young people about the hairy rhino and the rainforest is so critical. Indonesia's amazing cultural diversity is without equal - from ancient temples like Borobudur to colorful dance rituals depicting a variety of spirits and animals. And now since our *Hairy Rhino Children's Book Project* has begun the first Rhino Children's Dance in all of Indonesia, the hairy rhino might well make its own way into the hearts of local people as a **symbol** of this wild land and our need to act globally to preserve it.



*Robin W. Radcliffe  
Living Fossil Productions  
525 Spencer Road  
Ithaca, New York 14850*

# *The Hornless Rhinoceros*

*Story and illustrations by Robin William Radcliffe*



Bulu's horn was special, that much he knew. It was long, even for a hairy rhinoceros, and smoothly polished at its tip. When his mother wasn't looking, Bulu loved to plant his horn in the mud and dance until he was dizzy. 'Round and 'round he spun, his hair twisting about him in a wiry tangle, like a big brown hairy top. Bulu was proud of his horn.

It all began harmlessly enough, a dance here and another over there. Beyond the giant Rafflesia flower, Bulu whirled and hopped. What Bulu didn't know was that whisperings soon murmured in the forest of an enchanted unicorn - the dancing rhino with a magical horn.

One morning Bulu lumbered upon a cluster of papaya bats hanging from a Rambutan tree. Just then a light shined on a hidden patch of papaya. Astonished, the hungry bats dropped from their perches to feed.

“How did the rhino bring the light?” screeched a pop-eyed papaya bat.

“It must be the power of the rhino’s horn,” twittered his friends.

“It must be magic!”

And Bulu was proud of his horn.

In the steamy afternoon, Bulu rolled to and fro in a dry mud hole.

A pattern of blue-jeans frogs looked on. Just then water welled up around the hairy rhino. Astounded, the thirsty frogs flung themselves into the pool.

“How did the rhino bring the water?” croaked the chubby orange frog.

“It must be the power of the rhino’s horn,” croaked back his friends.

“It must be magic!”

And Bulu was proud of his horn.

Evening came and Bulu marched proudly ahead of his mother along a forest path.



They stopped suddenly at a jumble of bones that lay before them. A wire snare was wrapped tightly around the leg bone, the leg bone of a hairy rhinoceros.

"Who did this?" cried Bulu.

"Man," answered his mother. "Only men kill rhinos. They kill us for our horn."

Bulu turned away in fear, but it was too late. A squeal echoed in the forest and Bulu was jerked skyward. He dangled helplessly above the ground, his long horn entrapped in a thick wire snare. The hairy rhino pushed and pushed with all of his strength. At last he fell to the forest floor. His horn was gone.

For many days Bulu lay hurt.

He listened as his mother told him of times long past when hairy rhinos were common in the forest. A time when she and her friends would share a favorite wallow, or plant their horns in the mud and dance until they were dizzy.

Tears streamed down Bulu's hairy face.

“What use is a hornless rhinoceros?” Bulu asked his mother.

“My son, it is not your horn but you who are precious,” she replied. “Someday humans too will see that the forest needs the hairy rhino.”

In a small village on the edge of the rainforest, a young boy lay ill. His name was Junaidi. Far away in the jungle, Junaidi’s father removed the horn from the snare he had set. He looked around.

“Where is the rhinoceros?” he puzzled, knowing his snare usually killed the animal. The horn was special, that much he knew. It was long, even for a hairy rhinoceros, and smoothly polished at its tip. Clutching his prize, Junaidi’s father hurried back to his ailing son in the village.

“Junaidi, you must take this powerful medicine,” said his father.

“It is a piece of the hairy rhino’s horn.”



And father told Junaidi how to grind the horn to a powder so he could take it with his tea. The boy lay alone in his bed, eyeing the horn. He wondered what had become of the rhinoceros to whom it once belonged.

One morning Junaidi awoke feeling better. Word of his recovery spread through the village.

“It must be the power of the rhino’s horn,” said the people.  
“It must be magic!”

Plodding sadly in the forest, Bulu longed to dance dizzily once more.

“Look at the hornless rhinoceros,” twittered the papaya bats.

“He is useless without his horn.”

Just then Bulu moved a tree and light shined in upon a hidden patch of papaya.

“Look what the rhino did!” screeched the pop-eyed papaya bat.

“And he did it without his horn!” twittered his friends.  
And Bulu was proud of himself.

That afternoon, Bulu buried his naked head in the drying mud of a wallow to escape the teasing.

“Look at the hornless rhinoceros,” croaked the blue-jeans frogs.

“He is useless without his horn.”

Just then Bulu dug deeply and a pool of water appeared.

“Look what the rhino did!” croaked the chubby orange frog.

“And he did it without his horn!” croaked back his friends. And Bulu was proud of himself.

Bulu found his mother and together they wandered home. Just then Junaidi’s father jumped out aiming his spear at Bulu’s mother. He wanted more horn in case illness returned to the village. Father stepped forward to hurl the deadly weapon.

“Stop!” yelled Junaidi.

“I am well now, Father, but NOT because of any magic horn!”

“I saw you get better with my own eyes.” said his father.

“It was because you took the horn tea!”



“No, Father, I did not drink it,” and Junaidi pulled from his pocket, the horn, for all to see.

Junaidi’s father put down his spear.

“Look what we did!” Junaidi whispered to Bulu.

“We proved to one and all there is no magic power in your silly horn!”

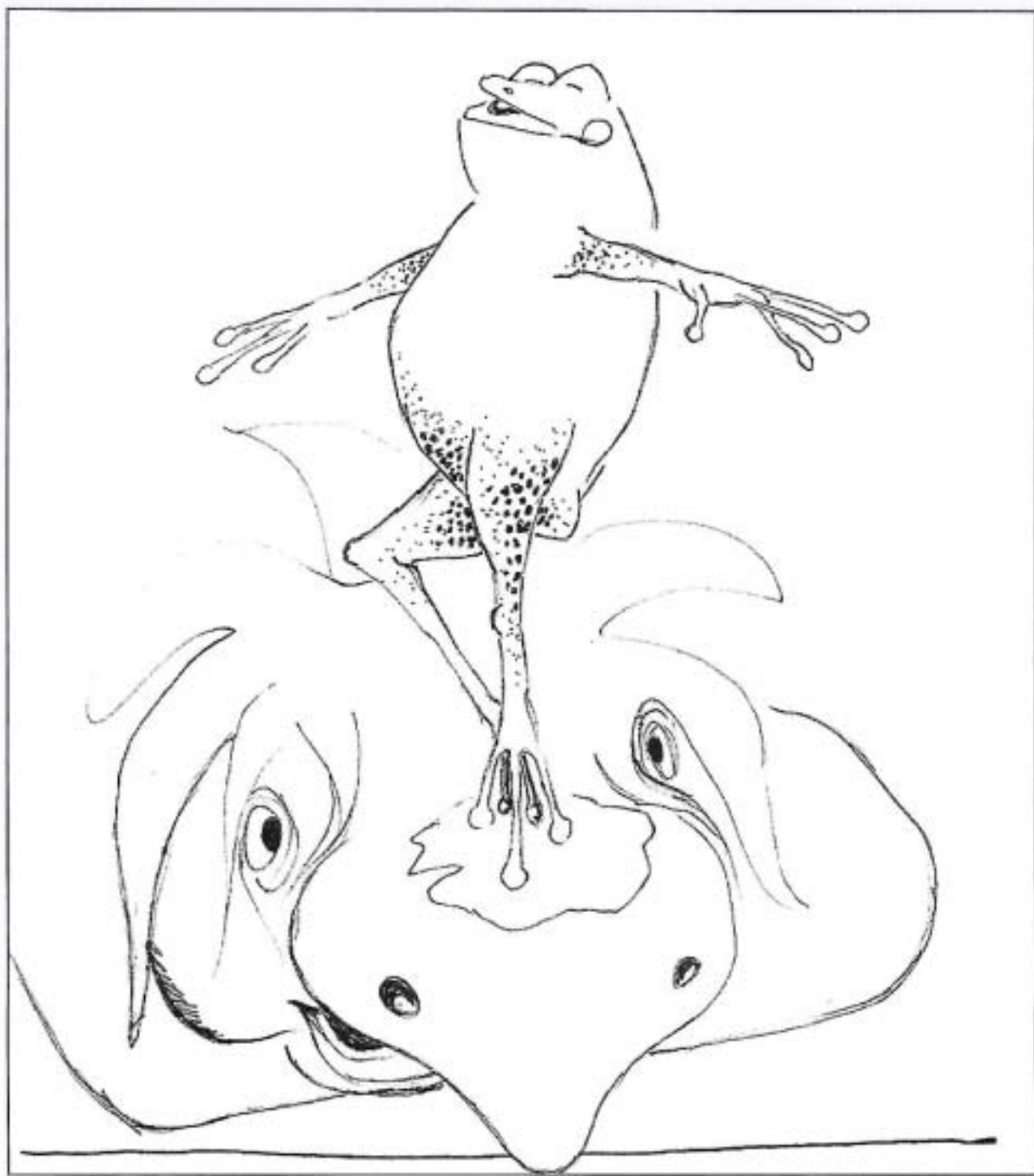
And Bulu and Junaidi were both quite proud of themselves.

That night, Junaidi and his father removed the deadly snares they had set in the forest. On the way home the boy saw Bulu through the jungle vines.

“Look, Father,” Junaidi said. “The hornless rhinoceros!”

Father and son watched Bulu roll over in his wallow. A trio of papaya bats clung to the rhino’s hairy back, feasting on the fruit he had found. All around him blue-jeans frogs frolicked in the pool he had made. Bulu watched cross-eyed and smiling as the chubby orange frog spun ‘round and ‘round on Bulu’s hornless nose - dancing until he was dizzy.

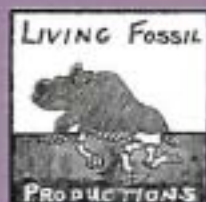
Junaidi smiled too. At least the snares were gone from his part of the rainforest.







Robin W. Radcliffe is a wildlife doctor with a strong interest in ecological education and is committed to strengthening the conservation voice in children's literature.



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