

## 2023 Report

# IUCN SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group



**CHAIR**  
Bibhab Kumar  
Talukdar

Aaranyak, Guwahati,  
India

**RED LIST AUTHORITY  
COORDINATOR**  
Susie Ellis Wildt  
International Rhino  
Foundation

**NUMBER OF MEMBERS**  
58

#### SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Website: <https://rhinos.org/our-work/research-and-publications/iucn-asian-rhino-specialist-group/>

### Mission statement

The mission of the IUCN SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group (AsRSG) is to foster conservation and management of the three species of Asian rhinos and their habitats.

### Projected impact 2021–2025

Out of the three species of Asian rhinos, the wild population of the Greater One-horned Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) has been found stable and with an increasing trend in 2021.

### Targets 2021–2025

#### ASSESS

**T-009** Prepare IUCN SSC AsRSG/AfRSG and TRAFFIC International Report on rhinos for CITES CoP-19.  
Status: Achieved

**T-010** Prepare IUCN SSC AsRSG/AfRSG and TRAFFIC International Report on rhinos for CITES CoP-20 to be held in 2025.  
Status: On track

#### PLAN

**T-003** Complete preparation of Greater One-horned Rhino Conservation Plan.  
Status: On track

**T-004** Assist Indonesia to prepare the National Plan for Javan Rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) and Sumatran Rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*).  
Status: On track

#### ACT

**T-005** Assist India and Nepal with technical inputs from the AsRSG members to increase the wild population of the Greater One-horned Rhinos to 4,500 by 2025.  
Status: On track

#### NETWORK

**T-006** Build capacity of AsRSG members on Red List and Green Status assessment.  
Status: On track

**T-007** Increase membership of AsRSG to about 100 by 2025 by including budding young professionals of diverse backgrounds with the ability to strengthen AsRSG.  
Status: On track

#### COMMUNICATE

**T-008** Hold the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Rhino Range States Meeting in Nepal in 2023.  
Status: Achieved

**T-011** Prepare and Submit the IUCN SSC AsRSG Chair's report in *Pachyderm Journal* for 2022-2023.  
Status: Achieved

### Activities and results 2023

#### PLAN

##### Planning

**T-003 Complete preparation of Greater One-horned Rhino Conservation Plan.** (KSR 8)  
Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: This is in progress and the draft contents have been prepared and circulated for review by rhino-bearing area managers and AsRSG members during 2023.

**T-004 Assist Indonesia to prepare National Plan for Javan Rhino (*R. sondaicus*) and Sumatran Rhino (*D. sumatrensis*).** (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: Draft content was prepared, but this needs to be endorsed by Indonesia's Ministry for Environment and Forestry as the Javan and Sumatran Rhino are currently found only in Indonesia and endorsement or agreement to this proposed National Plan would need government blessings to execute key activities for the recovery of these two critically endangered species of Asian rhinos.

#### ACT

##### Technical advice

**T-005 Assist India and Nepal with technical inputs from the AsRSG members to increase the wild population of Greater One-horned Rhinos to 4,500 by 2025.** (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 3

Result description: During 2023, three technical inputs were provided to further strengthen monitoring of Greater



One-horned Rhino (*R. unicornis*) in India and Nepal including planning for capture, translocation and release of GOH Rhinos from wild to wild as part of GOH Rhino range expansion in India and Nepal.

#### **NETWORK**

##### **Capacity building**

**T-006 Build capacity of AsRSG members on Red List and Green Status assessment.** (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in assessment tools: 3

Result description: Three more AsRSG members were briefed on basic knowledge of the Red List and Green List assessment process and encouraged to study in detail by visiting the website of the Red List and Green List Assessment.

##### **Membership**

**T-007 Increase membership of AsRSG to about 100 by 2025 by including budding young professionals of diverse backgrounds with the ability to strengthen AsRSG.** (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 7

Result description: Although an invitation to join AsRSG was sent to about 11 individuals, only seven new members accepted the invitation and joined through the Union portal.

#### **COMMUNICATE**

##### **Communication**

**T-011 Prepare and submit the IUCN SSC AsRSG Chair's report in *Pachyderm Journal* for 2021-2022.** (KSR 12)

Number of Species e-bulletin, Save Our Species newsletter, SSC Groups' newsletter editions produced: 1

Result description: The AsRSG Chair's report was submitted and published in *Pachyderm Journal*.

##### **Scientific meetings**

**T-008 Hold the 3rd Asian Rhino Range States Meeting in Nepal in 2023.** (KSR 12)

Number of presentations delivered in scientific events: 10

Result description: The 3rd Asian Rhino Range States meeting was held in Chitwan National Park, Nepal February 3-5, 2023, with over 116 participants including delegates from five Asian rhino range states – India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia. In this meeting deliberations on protection, population management, habitat management, research monitoring and information sharing, coordination and cooperation were made. Based on the three days of deliberations, the delegates of Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Nepal recognized the diverse challenges being faced by the Asian rhinos and agreed on: (1) Protection, (1.1) strengthening the

protection regime, intelligence gathering, and real-time sharing of intelligence information on rhino crime and its illegal horn trade, (1.2) use of advanced technology including use of forensic science to aid on-going protection and surveillance to prevent illegal hunting of rhinos, (1.3) enhance boots on the ground for regular field vigil to detect and deter wildlife offences in rhino bearing areas, with special emphasis on strategic locations, (1.4) upkeep high morale of frontline staff through improved field facilities and incentive packages, (1.5) enhancement of skills and capacity building of frontline staff including wildlife crime investigations, (1.6) provide alternative livelihoods to increase local economic growth and community development programs around Rhino-bearing Protected Areas, (1.7) mobilisation and empowerment of local communities for community-based conservation activities, (1.8) strengthening and harmonisation of a legal framework and regulations to combat wildlife crime; (2) Population Management, (2.1) establish National Conservation Breeding Programme for Sumatran Rhino in Indonesia, to direct the management of all Sumatran Rhinos under human care as a single population and manage for optimal growth, and use multiple approaches to accurately detect and save isolated



Typical alluvial flood plain grassland used by Greater One-horned Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*)  
Photo: Bibhab Kumar Talukdar



Sumatran Rhino populations in the wild, then consolidate them into a sanctuary for breeding purposes as a part of the national breeding programme, (2.2) support the movement of Sumatran Rhino amongst the breeding centres under the National Conservation Breeding Programme to optimise breeding opportunities, genetic diversity and population growth, (2.3) establish and operate the Javan Rhino Study and Conservation Area (JRSCA) Management System as a management centre for the Javan Rhinoceros population, (2.4) establish a second habitat and population of the Javan Rhino outside of the Ujung Kulon National Park, (2.5) encourage the exchange of rhinos between the populations of same species in order to improve the genetic health, (2.6) explore possibilities of expanding rhino ranges within the country or between rhino range countries for optimal population management, (2.7) sharing of technologies and scientific knowledge to restore the species and ecosystems, including Assisted Reproduction Technology (ART); (3) Habitat Management, (3.1) improve habitat management techniques in rhino bearing areas to maximise habitat suitability and expansion of its range, (3.2) develop and implement rhino habitat management guidelines to ensure continuous availability of food, water and

space for rhinos; (3.3) minimising the threats on the rhino habitats including invasive alien species, (3.4) adopting wildlife-friendly measures in developmental projects to minimise the adverse effect on rhino habitat and prevent fragmentation and degradation of the rhino range; (4) Research, monitoring and information sharing, (4.1) conduct/promote long-term research on various aspects related to rhino conservation including population and habitat management, captive breeding potential, human-rhino interface, genetic health and control of invasive species, (4.2) establish routine-based rhino population monitoring system in rhino bearing areas and conduct rhino population survey every four years, (4.3) promote studies on potential impacts of climate change on species and habitats, (4.4) undertake studies on rhino health issues and potential diseases and take necessary steps for management intervention as per One Health principles; (4.5) conduct water health assessment and availability in rhino habitats, (4.6) identify potential areas and conduct a feasibility study for reintroduction, (4.7) sharing studies, research outcomes and best practices among range countries; (5) Coordination and cooperation, (5.1) strengthen transboundary collaboration among Asian rhino range countries, (5.2) strengthen cooperation and engagement

between Bhutan, Nepal and India sharing contiguous habitats and connecting corridors, (5.3) regularly carry out cross-learning visits among the managers and frontline staff of the rhino range countries, (5.4) increase the engagement of the local communities as stewards to secure the future of rhinos in range countries and promote co-existence. The Asian rhino range countries agreed to launch a special rhino conservation program focusing on community-based initiatives in the vicinity of their rhino-bearing areas. The member countries also agreed that the critically endangered Sumatran Rhino needs time-bound recovery measures in the range countries and appeal to global communities to complement, technically and financially, the effort to secure the species. The member countries, additionally, agreed to review the status of the three species of Asian rhinos every four years to reassess the need for joint actions to secure the future. The five Asian rhino range countries, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal, hereby commit to managing the populations of the Greater One-Horned, Javan and Sumatran Rhinos to achieve at least a 3% annual growth rate in their populations for these rhino-bearing countries, through the implementation of the strategic actions outlined in this Declaration.

Inaugural Session of the 3rd Asian Rhino Range States meeting in Chitwan NP, Nepal, 3-5 February 2023  
Photo: AsRSG



### Acknowledgements

The AsRSG is grateful to the International Rhino Foundation, Rhino Recovery Fund of Wildlife Conservation Network, WWF-Nepal, Aaranyak, National Trust for Nature Conservation-Nepal, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Govt. of Nepal, Zoological Society of London-Nepal for their support to organise the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Rhino Range States Meeting in Chitwan NP, Nepal on February 3-5, 2023.

### Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 9

Geographic regions: 9 Asia

Actions during 2023:

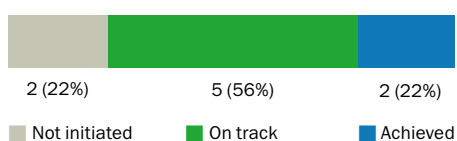
Plan: 2 (KSR 8)

Act: 1 (KSR 10)

Network: 2 (KSR 2)

Communicate: 2 (KSR 12)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:



Group photo of delegates at the 3rd Asian Rhino Range States Meeting held in Chitwan NP, Nepal from 3-5 February 2023  
Photo: AsRSG

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## Sumatran Rhino Rescue

IUCN Species Survival Commission, Re:wild, and International Rhino Foundation are the [Sumatran Rhino Survival Alliance](#) which supports the Government of Indonesia's Emergency Action Plan to save the species, working through local conservation organizations. The plan is to protect all remaining Sumatran Rhinos and search and rescue isolated Sumatran rhinos that are not breeding in the wild to breed them under human care.

Conservation achievements of the Sumatran Rhino Survival Alliance in 2023, include:

On 30 September 2023, Ratu delivered a female baby rhino at the Government of Indonesia's Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) in Way Kambas National Park. Ratu has successfully delivered three baby rhinos, namely Andatu (male, born in 2012), Delilah (female, born in 2016) and the latest female baby rhino, Anggi.

Another male baby rhino was born in the Way Kambas SRS on 25 November 2023. The second in just a few months! Born to Delilah, the second rhino birth at the SRS, this new male calf was named Indra.

A new Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) in East Aceh is expected to be completed this year. With this SRS in East Aceh, there will be three SRS in Indonesia: the oldest one in Way Kambas, and another in East Kalimantan.

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## High Level Interventions

High-level interventions address conservation issues of serious concern through letters to governments or companies, which highlight species and habitats under threat, and propose actions on their behalf. Each letter provides the necessary background and technical information, following a thorough review process that engages with SSC groups, experts across the network, and the IUCN regional offices and programmes.



Bachelor group of wild guanacos (*Lama guanicoe*) in La Payunia Provincial Reserve, Mendoza, Argentina  
Photo: Julie Maher

- **Urgent request to Argentina's Minister of Environment to update and improve the National Guanaco Management Plan.** On 5 June 2023, the SSC Chair sent a letter to the Minister of Environment of Argentina, recalling that the National Guanaco Management Plan of Argentina has been the subject of international concern as expressed by the IUCN World Conservation Congress (Marseille, 2020) [Rec-097-ES](#) requesting the suspension of said plan to undergo a review process. SSC acknowledged that the Ministry's Biodiversity Directorate reviewed the National Guanaco Management Plan, but that the process was interrupted. In the opinion of the experts of the South American Camelid Specialist Group, the current plan does not guarantee the conservation of the species or its habitat. In this regard, the SSC reiterated its offer to help conclude the review process for the plan to be satisfactorily modified.
- **Concern about emerging export in wild *Dendrobium* orchids in Indonesia.** The SSC Chair and the Orchid Specialist Group (OSG) sent a letter on 26 July 2023, to Indonesian authorities, the Director of the Secretariat of Scientific Authority for Biodiversity (National Research and Innovation Agency), and the Director of the Directorate of Biodiversity Conservation of Species and Genetic (Ministry of Environment and Forestry), raising SSC's concern about emerging export in wild *Dendrobium* orchids. Indonesia is globally significant for its orchids, with approximately 800 species of *Dendrobium*. Through sources including OSG members based in Indonesia, and information gathered from postings on social networks, it is the orchids in the genus *Dendrobium* that are being





# Species

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of the IUCN Species  
Survival Commission  
and Secretariat

**Part I**