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INDIAN RHINOCEROS
(*Rhinoceros unicornis*)
Photo by A.G. Watts

The Rhino Resource Centre

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When a large contingent of the world's rhino community met at the International Elephant and Rhino Research Symposium held in Vienna in June 2001, there was a widespread perception that the communication between rhino researchers in different continents and countries needed to be improved to be able to use all funds effectively and efficiently (Pp. 346-352 in H.M. Schwammer, T.J. Foose, M. Fouraker and D. Olson, *A research update on elephants and rhinos: proceedings of the International Elephant and Rhino Research Symposium, Vienna, June 7-11, 2001*. Münster: Schöling, 2002). We are all aware that there is a considerable store of knowledge about the five living species of rhinoceros in Africa and Asia, published in books and papers or stored away in reports and dissertations. While acknowledging the importance of the existing data as a foundation for further research and management issues, access to the literature is time-consuming and often impractical. With the initial support of the International Rhino Foundation and SOS Rhino, several steps were taken after the Vienna Symposium towards the establishment of a Rhino Resource Centre (abbreviated as RRC) dedicated to the storage and dissemination of everything pertaining to the rhinoceros.

Considerable progress has been made in the last two years. The Rhino Resource Centre has been registered as a charity in The Netherlands and a board has been constituted with Dr Nico J. van Strien as chairman, Prof. Dr Rob Visser as secretary/treasurer and Dr Esmond Bradley Martin as the first international member. The initiative has received the endorsement of the IUCN Species Survival Programme, as well as the Asian and African Rhino Specialist Groups. With Kees Rookmaaker as the chief editor, assistance with elusive French sources is volunteered by Dr Henri Carpentier of Paris.

As a result of earlier projects and a lifetime of interest in the rhinoceros, a substantial amount of literature on the five species of rhinoceros has already been assembled. At the moment (June 2003) the collection has close to 8700 references, dating from Roman times up to the latest books and articles, available in original or photocopies. The list of subjects is surprisingly wide, ranging from the traditional biological disciplines, to husbandry, management and veterinary studies, to the importance of the animal in different cultures. In fact, the rhinoceros is found in so many studies in such a variety of interests that it is safe to say that anybody venturing outside their immediate speciality is likely to find some new and refreshing insights in the works of colleagues in other disciplines.

The RRC is set up to get the right information to the right people at the right time. The RRC has opted to give access to all data through a website on the internet, registered as:

www.rhinoresourcecenter.com

This website is available worldwide and at this time contains a full bibliography of all titles in the collection, which can be searched by author, date or word in the title. There is also access to a database of notes on the rhinoceros, which again can be searched by subject, species or geographic location. Whatever the interest of the user, the result is a list of relevant data, which not only give the full title of the publication, but also the exact text pertaining to that particular topic.

While this is only a beginning, there is ample scope for the RRC to be established as a centre for all information on research, conservation and management of all five species of rhinoceros. There will be a database of all current workers on the rhinoceros in the field and in captivity. However, to achieve optimum benefit for the global rhino community, the work of the RRC needs to be expanded and upgraded. The work can only be done when there is a long-term commitment of funding from organizations, zoological gardens or individuals, who can thus make an important contribution to rhinoceros research and conservation.

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The 1st International Congress of Zookeepers

will take place at

Vogelpark Avifauna, The Netherlands

3rd - 7th October 2003

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www.iczoo.org