

Save the Rhinos, EAZA Rhino Campaign 2005/6

– *The launch* –

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When I first presented the proposal for a Rhino Campaign to the EAZA Conservation Committee in Leipzig two years ago things looked relatively good for rhinos in the wild. Last year Garamba National Park was coming under increasing pressure from poachers which were targeting not only rhinos but also many other species. This year that situation has worsened and there is a very real chance that the northern white rhino is now extinct in the wild and with it the status of the Garamba National Park will be lost.

The Royal Chitwan National Park has been held as a shining example of how a rhino population can recover given the right conditions. However the results of this year's census indicate that up to 30% of the population of Indian or greater one-horned rhinos (*Diceros bicornis*) has been lost to organised poaching.

Both Garamba and Chitwan are likely to be a direct result of the local political situation. We will be watching Zimbabwe for exactly this reason in the coming months and years.

However as you will hear in other presentations during this launch of the EAZA Rhino Campaign there is every reason to be optimistic about the future of rhinos in the wild and we can be very confident that the funds raised through the campaign will have a significant impact on the future of rhino populations.

We have been incredibly lucky this year to have the support of Save the Rhino International for the campaign. They bring considerable experience in fundraising for rhinos and of managing field programmes as well as a number of important contacts. Cathy Dean, the Director, will introduce you to SRI and their aims and objectives on the campaign. SRI have committed to employing a Campaign Coordinator for 18 months. Renaud Fulconis is known to many of you already bringing to the campaign not only his skills and experience in zoos but also a passion for rhinos.

I am also delighted to welcome Richard Emslie and Nico van Strien of the African Rhino Specialist Group and the Asian Rhino Specialist Group, respectively. They have given up their valuable time to be with us today to introduce you to some of the work which is underway in the range countries and how the Rhino Campaign will fit into their conservation work. Both Richard and Nico have already been very active in helping us choose the projects for the campaign using their knowledge and experience of people, countries and species to advise us.

The target for the campaign is to raise €350,000. Funds will be used to support at least one field programme for each rhino species. To achieve this, we hope that at least 150 EAZA members will register for the campaign.

When you compare these targets to the previous campaigns (Table 1) you will see that they are a challenge. However, we are confident that they are achievable.

Table 1) Results of previous EAZA Campaigns. *=preliminary results

Campaign	EAZA members registered	Funds raised
Bushmeat	149 registered	€ 150,000
Rainforest	97 registered	€ 287,471
Tigers	133 registered	€ 750,898
Shellshock	119 registered	€ 250,058*

Renaud Fulconis will introduce you to some of the projects as well as the Information Pack which probably forms one of the most comprehensive sources of information on rhinos ever produced under one cover.

Obviously the success of the campaign is dependent on zoos registering and getting involved in the campaign. We hope that the Information Pack will encourage not only zoos holding rhinos but also those without rhinos, but with the imagination to be able to use other species in their collections to tell the story of rhinos and their habitats. When you listen to the following presentations please give this some thought and consider how you can participate.

One thing that became obvious when reviewing campaigns and talking to zoo staff about them is that our staff really enjoy the involvement with EAZA campaigns. For many, particularly keepers, this may be their only opportunity to really contribute to field conservation efforts. It gets them involved and you are able to tap into some very exciting ideas and the energy and drive that these staff have. By joining us in the campaign you have a tremendous opportunity to get your staff involved and to take advantage of that enthusiasm.