

Projects 1518, 1960

Javan rhinoceros - Ujung Kulon
Nature Reserve
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Ujung Kulon Nature Reserve is the sole remaining habitat of the Javan rhinoceros and an outstanding conservation area. Project 1518 is designed to ensure the continuing existence of this viable and well-protected rain forest area with its rich fauna and flora; to implement a management plan to secure the long-term survival of the last Javan rhinoceros and other animals typical of the area; and to assist local authorities in proper management of the reserve. During 1980 the project was expanded to provide for a study of the migration pattern and individual home ranges of the Javan rhino and for a study of the ecology and behaviour of the wild pig.

The situation of the population of the Javan rhinoceros in Ujung Kulon continues to be promising. A census was carried out in March 1980 estimating a minimum of 57 and maximum of 66 animals. This reflects partly improved census methods but partly also a real population increase since the last census (November 1978). Few tracks of very young animals were found during the census, but from evidence gathered during the year it was clear that the rhinos are reproducing regularly. No signs of emigration out of the peninsula indicating population pressure there were found yet, and it seems that the population will still have to increase before this takes place.

In the study of the wild pig (Sus scrofa vittatus) and its ecology and behaviour, it emerged that one widely held opinion concerning the pigs in Ujung Kulon, namely that there is an overpopulation, is wrong. No signs of such an overpopulation could be found. In the first place, the environment there probably supports a large population. In the second place there is evidence of regulating mechanisms which limit the size of the population. A very high mortality among piglets was observed. Litter sizes at the beginning of the breeding season were around 6-10 piglets; towards the end of the breeding season this dropped to 2-4 young. Some mortality factors are very early separation of the young from their mothers and predation. Of 100 leopard faeces collected during the dry season about 13% contained remains of Sus scrofa. During the rainy season, the time when young pigs appear, 40% of the collected faeces contained remains of wild pigs.

There is no ground to fear any competition between rhinos and pigs. The pigs preferred habitat is forest whereas rhinos feed mainly in low secondary vegetation. Nest-building by pigs does not significantly influence the abundance of food plants of the Javan rhinoceros. Also nearly all the trees bitten by pigs continued to grow.

That Ujung Kulon and the survival of the Javan rhinoceros are of great concern to the Indonesian government is shown by the fact that the status of the area has been raised to that of a National Park. The guarding of Ujung Kulon continues to be done well, but still could be improved on as was shown by a grave case of timber poaching. Occasional poaching of seaturtles and coral was also reported.

In 1980 the Directorate of Nature Conservation (PPA) requested that a park planner from WWF assist PPA in implementing the management plan prepared by FAO for Ujung Kulon and in establishing a defined system of management that would ensure the development and continuation of Ujung Kulon as a valid national park. A park planner began work in November and is giving specific attention to upgrading the guard system and the administrative structure of the Park, improving law enforcement and park protection, guiding plans for tourism and other developments, training a chief park interpreter, formulating an interpretive plan, and initiating a buffer zone development project in the eastern region of the Park.

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A study of the Javan rhino's population dynamics and habitat requirements began in December 1980. After arriving at the field station at Peucang Island, we prepared for a preliminary programme to observe the Ujung Kulon peninsula as Javan rhinoceros habitat. General forest types and rhino tracks were studied. Observations were made of a wallow and vegetation types in the Gn. Ramea and Tanjung Layar area.

December to February is the rainy season and Ujung Kulon is drained by a number of rivers and streams. The lowlands round Gn. Telanca were swamped by fresh water. Passage through the dense and thorny vegetation usually had to be cut with a bush-knife. Steep and slippery slopes, numerous waterways and stretches of muddy soil made rhino tracks difficult to follow and track measurements inaccurate, so no tracking was done this season. A census of the rhino population will be undertaken in 1981, and rhino tracks will then be followed and plaster casts taken.

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