

STOCK

SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS

(*Didermoceros sumatrensis*)

AT COPENHAGEN ZOO

by Svend Andersen

Director of Copenhagen Zoo, Denmark

IN the summer of 1959 an expedition, organized by the Copenhagen and Basle Zoos in association with the Bogor Zoo, Indonesia, set out to try and capture three pairs of Sumatran Rhinos for the Copenhagen, Basle and Bogor Zoos. The underlying purpose of the expedition was to try and start breeding colonies in captivity of this very rare animal which appears to be in real danger of extinction. The area chosen for the search was the surroundings of the Siak River, just opposite Singapore, where the Sumatran Rhino is unprotected. The expedition was particularly anxious not to disturb the rhinos in the Indonesian nature reserves.

During the summer of 1959, ten Sumatran Rhinos were captured in the Siak river area: nine females and one male which unfortunately escaped. One of the females was sent to Bogor Zoo where it died in 1961, one went to Basle Zoo where it died in the summer of 1961 of incurable anaemia; and a third, 'Subur', was sent to the Copenhagen Zoo. The rest were released.

'Subur' was shipped first to Singapore where she was met by the Curator from the Copenhagen Zoo, Mr Arne Schiøtz, who remained with her, night and day until she left for Denmark — there was a very real danger of her horn being cut off if she were left alone, since throughout the Far East rhino horn is highly valued as it is believed to have aphrodisiac properties. From Singapore, Subur and Mr Schiøtz flew to London and then to Copenhagen where they arrived in the evening of 4th December 1959. A warm den and a pool of heated water had been prepared for Subur and the first thing she did on arrival was to go straight into the pool where she immediately defaecated (throughout the flight from Singapore she had hardly defaecated at all) — and

every day since she has gone into the water for this purpose.

Until she arrived at Copenhagen, Subur had been fed daily with boiled rice balls. This was just about the worst thing we could have given her, but when the leaves of her native forests were no longer available, rice was the only thing she would accept. As the result she suffered from constipation on several occasions and to relieve this we had, on two occasions, to give her injections which were administered with a Cap-Chur pistol. As it was winter, there was almost no greenstuff available and so we offered her different varieties of hay. After she had been in the zoo three weeks, her keeper managed to tempt her to eat a type of lucerne hay. She soon took to this and it has formed the bulk of her diet ever since. In addition to the lucerne hay (she is given as much as she will eat), she now receives two five-kilo feeds a day, consisting of a mixture of raw potatoes, raw carrots and raw apples; in addition, she is sometimes given a small feed of rolled oats. Water is always available for her to drink.

As can be seen from the photographs (see Plates 32), she is much hairier than other species of rhinos and the skin folds are less well-developed than in the Indian and Javan Rhinos; the Sumatran Rhino is also the smallest species of rhino, seldom more than 4½ ft. at the shoulder. Another characteristic of the Sumatran Rhino is its soft feet. For this reason we put sand in Subur's enclosure as sharp gravel hurts her feet. Although her skin appears to be thick and heavy, it cannot stand the dryness of the Danish summer (even though it often seems very wet to us!). During her first summer (1960), the skin on her back became very broken and chapped. We therefore made her a mud pool in her outdoor enclosure and if the weather is warm, she invariably spends a lot of time in it. We have also added a sprinkler-shower to the enclosure and she seems to get much pleasure from standing beneath it.

Defaecation invariably takes place in the pool inside the stable; she does not have any

special place for urination. When she comes on heat, she urinates in short squirts instead of in the usual steady stream. We are still trying to obtain a male Sumatran Rhino in order to breed from Subur, but so far we have not had any success in our search.

A STUDY OF ORANG-UTAN BEHAVIOUR IN THE SEMI-WILD STATE

1959-60

by Barbara Harrison

The Editors of the Yearbook are indebted to the author and to the Curator of the Sarawak Museum for permission to reproduce the following article which originally appeared in The Sarawak Museum Journal, IX, 15-16, 1960. They very much regret that for reasons of space, certain personal notes on the behaviour of individual Orang-utans have had to be omitted. Wherever this has been done, the omission is indicated by an asterisk.

INTRODUCTION

BARBARA HARRISSON'S studies on improving techniques for keeping abandoned or sick baby Orang-utans alive in captivity are part of a wider programme which has included intensive field work in the remaining jungle areas where Orang-utans are still to be found, as well as in the detailed analysis of bone remains from archaeological sites which are providing proof that the Orang-utan once had a much wider range in Borneo. This work was initiated and is being continued under the auspices of the Sarawak Government and in close co-operation with the Conservator of Forests, Mr B. E. Smythies, and the field staff of the Forest Department generally, as well as interested individuals (notably Dr N. S. Haile and Lord Medway). A generous grant to assist in preparing the present material by Barbara Harrison was made by the Wennergren Foundation in the USA, and other valuable assistance has been given by Mr Harold Coolidge of the Natural Science Foundation in Washington, USA. A thirty-minute film of the natural behaviour of Orang-utans has been made. The colour version is now available in Sarawak; and it is being widely shown on television in the black-and-white version. The

following report should, therefore, be regarded as a preliminary and to some extent personal contribution in a continuing programme of study on a subject of great and increasing urgency to all interested in animal conservation.

Tom Harrison, Curator of the Sarawak Museum and Editor of the Sarawak Museum Journal.

PRESENT DISTRIBUTION OF THE ORANG-UTAN AND ITS DECLINE

The recent and rapid decrease of the Orang-utan (*Pongo pygmaeus*) in the remaining habitat areas of Sumatra and Borneo is a matter of grave concern. There appears to be now no effective protection in Sumatra and Indonesian Borneo. The protected populations in British Borneo are dangerously small and are confined to a few districts and 'pockets' in Sarawak and North Borneo (there are none in Brunei). It is a remarkable fact that although many scientists, naturalists and collectors from Alfred Russel Wallace, Count Beccari and William Hornaday of the Smithsonian Institution, onward, have seen and shot the wild Orang-utan, no serious attempt has been made to carry out systematic field observations of the Orang-utan living in the wild. There is no reliable, first-hand, scientific information whatever on daily journeys, arboreal/terrestrial movement, natural groups, food gathering, effect on vegetation habitat, calls and sounds, other than what we have gathered here in recent years.

One reason for this state of affairs is the practical difficulty of carrying out such research — lack of communication in the areas concerned, the impracticability of continuously following groups of Orang-utans on their journeys over wide jungle areas, where they move from tree to tree, coming down to the forest floor only occasionally — and workers may easily spend days under awkward field conditions without making contact (as well we know). No outside organization has hitherto sponsored any such research project, which is necessarily expensive, but urgently needed. This is at least a beginning. We hope it will develop.

The decline of Orang-utans is primarily due to the increase of man and the intensive collecting of specimens, dead or alive, by collectors

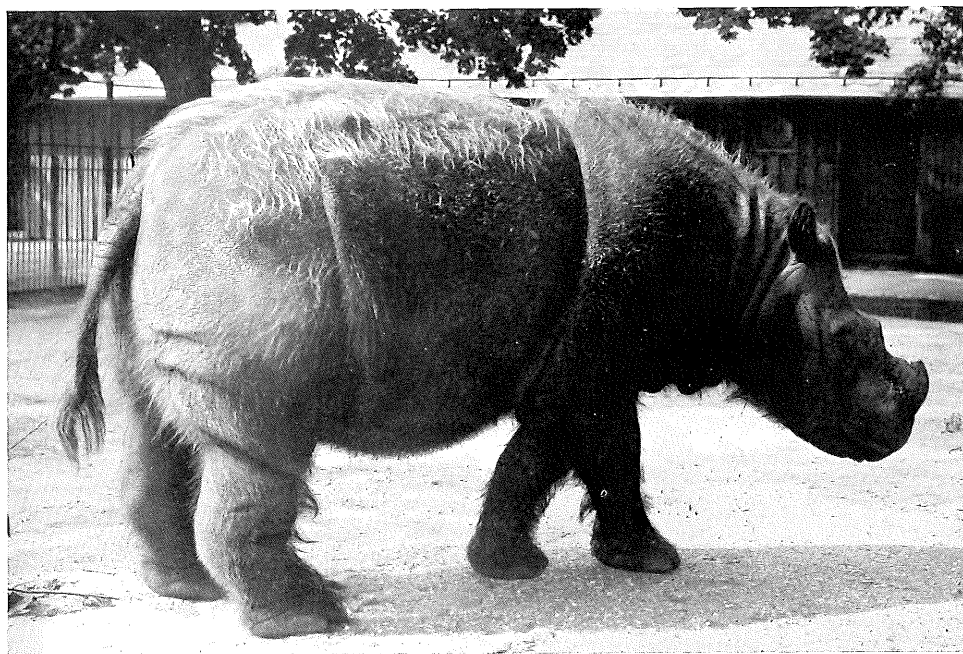


Plate XXXII

'Subur', the female Sumatran Rhinoceros (*Didermocerus sumatrensis*) at the Copenhagen Zoo (see pages 56-57). As far as is known, she is the only Sumatran Rhino in captivity and the Copenhagen Zoo is hoping to obtain a male and breed from her. There are very few Sumatran Rhinos living in the wild. As with other animals in danger of extinction, it is vital that breeding colonies of them in captivity should be established.

Erik Parbst

Plate XXXIII

A close-up photograph of the Sumatran Rhino, showing its unusual foot formation. Its feet are much softer than those of other species of rhino, since in the wild it lives in damp, marshy areas of the forest. The Sumatran Rhino is the smallest and hairiest species of rhino and its skin folds are much less pronounced than in the Indian or Javan Rhinos.

Erik Parbst

