

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Technical Bulletin Reprint

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From the Brookfield Zoo



Birth Boosts Captive Rhino Population

Chicago's Brookfield Zoo announced the birth of a black rhinoceros on January 18. The birth of this endangered species is significant to American zoos that have been working in a cooperative effort to improve management of the species and to breed more rhinos.

The rhino calf, which weighs approximately 60 pounds, is the first offspring of the father, six-year-old Embu, and the second offspring of the mother, 14-year-old Brook. The newborn brings the total number of black rhinos at Brookfield Zoo to four.

This marks the fourth black rhino birth at Brookfield Zoo in its 50-year history. Brookfield Zoo's rhino, Mary, gave birth in 1944 to the nation's first black rhino born in captivity. Mary, who holds the longevity record for black rhinos in captivity, died at age 47 in 1980.

The mortality rate of newborn rhinos in captivity is high. Of the 23 calves born in the United States during the past five years, 12 have died. Today the black rhino population in the U.S. totals 65; the world population in captivity is approximately 140.

A native of Africa, the black rhinoceros has been decimated in the wild. The greatest threat to its survival is poaching, primarily due to the rhino horn trade, which has destroyed 70 per cent of the world population since 1970.

In the 1970's, North Yemen, an area bordering Saudi Arabia, consumed 40 per cent of the world rhino trade for the purpose of mak-

ing dagger handles. The daggers are presented to young Yemen men as a symbol of manhood. Also, the horn is mistakenly believed to have medicinal and aphrodisiac qualities by many Eastern cultures.

In an effort to help propagate this species, Brookfield Zoo is participating with other zoos in the black rhino Species Survival Plan (SSP) of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums. According to Edward J. Maruska, AAZPA Coordinator of Black Rhinoceros and director of the Cincinnati Zoo, "...there has

been an appreciable loss of black rhino in the Zambia and Kenya area in the last few years. I had an opportunity to visit the Luangwa Valley with a number of zoo colleagues in June, 1979, and at that time the Luangwa Valley had a stable population of some 4,000 black rhinos. In the five years since that trip," states Maruska, "the population in that area is down to a low of about 1,000 animals." The ultimate goal of the SSP is to reintroduce endangered species like the black rhino to their natural habitat in the wild.



Brookfield Zoo's newest resident, Shima, a black rhinoceros, seems a bit unsteady as she takes her first steps. Shima was born January 18 in the Pachyderm House and is the zoo's fourth black rhino birth.