



The Crash

The newsletter for rhino professionals

IRKA

March 2011

Keeper Development Program: Becky Krywko, Saint Louis Zoo

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The Saint Louis Zoo black rhinoceros program has been in existence for many years; we've housed 18 different black rhinos since 1938. In recent years, we have put a focus on developing a breeding program. We acquired 1.1 young black rhinos recommended for breeding by the AZA Black Rhino SSP. In 2009 they had a successful breeding and we were about to have our first black rhino calf in 20 years! We started to prepare for the birth and that's when I discovered information on the International Rhino Keepers Association Keeper Professional Development Program (IRKA KPDP). While we had full confidence in our preparations, we figured it wouldn't hurt to see what other successful black rhino programs were doing. I applied for the KPDP and was awarded a funding scholarship. We decided I would visit as many institutions as possible in a reasonable amount of time- 3 different facilities for 3 days each. Through the generosity and coordination of several institutions, I traveled the state of Ohio for a truly unforgettable experience.

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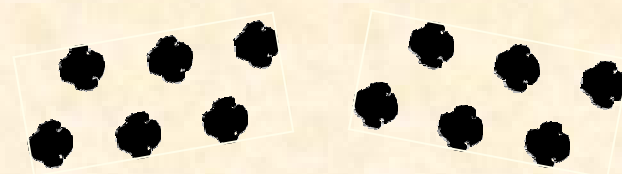
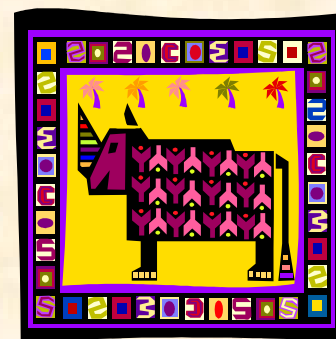
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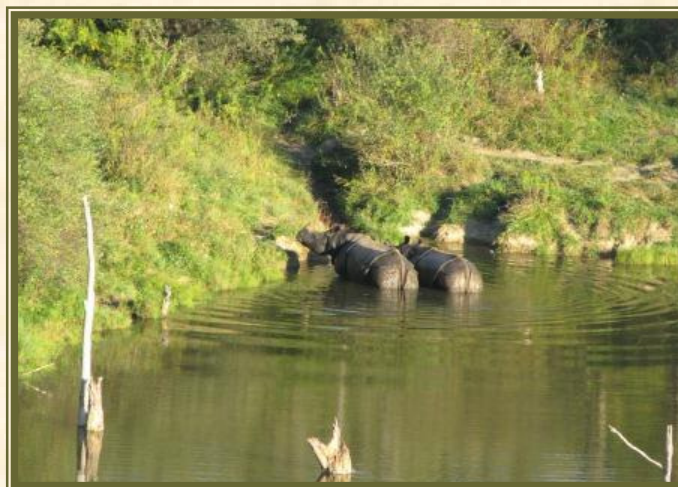
INDIAN RHINOS STROLL THROUGH THE ROLLING HILLS OF THE WILDS

My first stop was The Wilds in southeast Ohio. This facility is unlike any place I have visited before. Among many things, it houses a unique mix of ungulate species which live together in huge rolling pastures. The Wilds is so spacious that we would spend hours a day locating and evaluating their rhinos. There were even times that we would "lose" a rhino in the brush and have to come back later in the day to observe it! Their enthusiastic staff works

together like a close knit family. They allowed me to observe some field captures and procedures and included me in the day-to-day routine. Their staff even went out of their way to schedule an impromptu visit to the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo (who only 2 weeks prior had a beautiful female black rhinoceros born).



GOH'S TAKING A DIP IN ONE OF THE SEVERAL LAKES AT THE WILDS

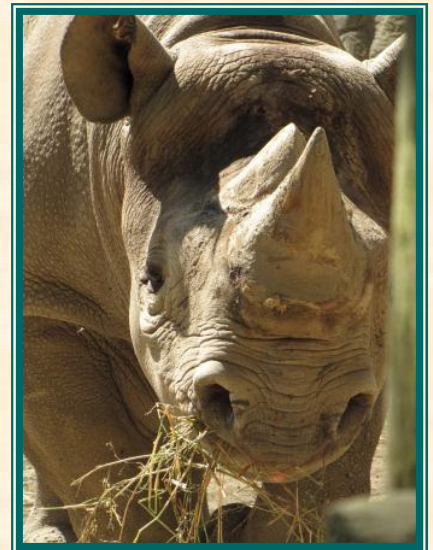




I had several up close experiences while at The Wilds which included meeting greater one-horned and white rhinoceroses face to face while out in the paddocks. I left there beaming every day. While at times it was difficult to compare their program with ours, I could not have had a better beginning to my travels than my time spent with the hospitable staff of The Wilds.

THE WILDS

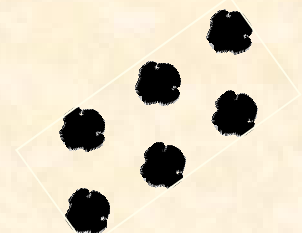
Next, I visited The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. This program was the most similar to ours at the Saint Louis Zoo; they house black rhinoceros and Asian elephant breeding programs with an emphasis on daily training. The staff is well versed in black rhino care and had quite a depth of knowledge. While there, I quizzed them on all aspects of black rhino care and shared details of our program. I also worked beside them during their daily routine and observed several training sessions. Some of these sessions included black rhinoceros and Asian elephant blood draws, exercise sessions and even a brushing of rhino teeth! These sessions gave me fresh ideas on how to approach basic rhino care. I left Columbus feeling energized and ready to apply my newfound knowledge back in Saint Louis.



TOOTH CLEANING TRAINING WITH FEMALE BLACK RHINO

COLUMBUS ZOO

KIJITO





My last stop was the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden. This facility and staff amazed me at every turn. They have an older zoo (celebrating 135 years during my visit) but they have done a fantastic job renovating their aging barns. If something needed to be trained, it simply became

part of their daily routine. I was able to observe a rectal ultrasound on a young greater one-horned rhinoceros which was used to track her ovulation down to the day. It was a lesson in vet and animal care staff cooperation to take steps to achieve a common goal: successful artificial insemination of this endangered species. The highlight of my trip was observing Sumatran rhinos for the first time in my professional career. What distinctive animals!! While at Cincinnati they also tailored my experience to include red river hog husbandry since I also care for that species in Saint Louis. The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden's rhinoceros program taught me to think outside the box, make the most of what you have and that most things are possible with a little planning.



NIKKI



SUCI

Cincinnati Zoo
Cincinnati Zoo

The IRKA KPDP was amazing! The institutions that I visited were excited to be involved in the program and shared all they could. I am grateful for each personalized experience. I am extremely thankful for the support of the Saint Louis Zoo at every level. This program helped mold me into a better keeper and enhanced the existing Saint Louis Zoo black rhinoceros program. On January 14, 2011 we celebrated the successful birth of a bouncing male black rhino. Thank you again for the generosity; the IRKA KPDP is a wonderful collaboration!!



RUKA

Black rhino
Baby!

