

Rosemary as Myrtle's only known offspring surviving in Bubiana Conservancy. When our teams found Rosemary, she was with Figtree, Marula's four-year-old calf. Marula and Myrtle were "best friends" and always found close to each other or "babysitting" for one another's calves, so it is no surprise that their two offspring were together.



We also were able to move both our local big heavies - Dozer and Ganya. Dozer had a number of new scars indicating he had been scrapping recently with Ganya. There was only one death on the operation - a year-old calf that had been badly wounded by poachers.

Lowveld Rhino Trust

Blondie, a young male rhino orphaned when his mother was shot by poachers, is one of five orphans being hand-raised by staff from the Lowveld Rhino Trust. He will be released into the wild when he is old enough to fend for himself. *Photo: Lowveld Rhino Trust*

And, since May, eight poachers have been killed in the Lowveld during armed confrontations with police, compared to four known rhino poaching losses. So for the moment at least, the numbers are in the rhinos' favor.

There is still hope for Zimbabwe's rhinos. Even though poaching has doubled over the past year, births in the Lowveld Conservancies still exceed deaths. During the recently completed translocation operations, our rhino monitors found several new calves! If we can successfully protect Zimbabwe's rhinos during the current crisis and pressure the government to crack down on poaching, then this species can have a bright future indeed.

Update: Greater One-Horned Rhinos in India and Nepal

By Dr. Susie Ellis, Executive Director
International Rhino Foundation, Yulee, FL
s.ellis@rhinos-irf.org

Rhino poaching worldwide has now reached a 15-year high – and rhinos in Nepal and some parts of India are virtually under attack by well-organized gangs of poachers that sell rhino horn on the black market. Nonetheless, there is some good news. Despite poaching losses, the population of Greater One-Horned Rhinos continues to increase, and the species was recently downgraded to Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.

Greater One-Horned Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) populations now number between 2,800 and 2,850. This species is restricted to Nepal and the State of Assam in northern India. Although the population is increasing, poaching pressure is intense throughout its range. In 2008, 26 rhinos died at the hands of poachers in Assam and at least eight were poached in Nepal, where populations are highly fragmented and difficult to protect. Already in 2009, at least 17 rhinos have been poached in India and Nepal. Despite these losses, the species' population is stable. But, current protection and conservation measures must be continued and intensified to maintain population growth.

A Big Move – Greater One-Horned Rhinos Successfully Translocated in India

When the Greater one-horned rhino was downlisted from Endangered to Vulnerable, it represented a huge success story for a species that once numbered fewer than 20 individuals. However, more than 85% of the world's Greater one-horned rhino population inhabits Kaziranga National Park in Assam, India. Pabitora National Park holds about 100 rhinos -- the park's carrying capacity has been exceeded,

which leads to an increased risk of rhino-human conflict in buffer zone areas as animals move out of the park and into agricultural areas to forage for food. The International Rhino Foundation, in partnership with the Assam Forest Department, WWF-India and other NGOs, launched Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (IRV 2020) to reduce risks to India's rhino population by ensuring that the animals are spread throughout multiple parks with enough habitat to encourage population growth.

In April 2008, two male greater one-horned rhinos were successfully translocated from Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary to Manas National Park in Assam -- the first time that wild rhinos have been translocated in India.

Both rhinos are in good health and are being monitored on a daily basis by trained park guards and monitors. Meticulous planning for the translocation, carried out under tight security, spanned several years. Under the guidance of veterinarians, conservationists and forest department officials, the two animals were immobilized and then transported 250 km (155 miles) in crates. The arrival of rhinos was heralded by local communities near the Park. A UNESCO-designated World Heritage site, Manas National Park is one of the nine biodiversity hotspots in India, and was home to several endangered species, including rhinos, before local political unrest in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to their eradication. Work is underway to restore Manas' former wildlife populations, with these translocations among the early steps.



Two male greater one-horned rhinos successfully reintroduced to Manas National Park. (Photo: Aaranyak)

To make sure that adequate security was in place before the move, IRF and partners built community

support, provided vehicles, wireless sets and other equipment to guards, and helped build watch towers, bridges, and roads. Guards are challenged by the curiosity of the two translocated males, who frequently venture into the park's fringe areas. One of the two rhinos wandered out of the park in late 2008, and traveled nearly 80 kilometers [49.7 mi.] during the monsoon season before the veterinary team could safely immobilize him and return him to the park. The IRV 2020 partners are now building a fence along the southern border of the park to prevent the translocated rhinos from moving into unprotected areas where they could be injured or killed.



Rhino release in Manas National Park (Photo: WWW-India)

With strong support and assistance from local communities, eight kilometers (4.97 mi.) of fencing along the border where rhinos stray most frequently will be completed by mid-October.

The next phase of rhino translocations (originally scheduled for March/April 2009) was postponed to allow time for the fence to be completed before more rhinos are brought into the park. Additionally, there have been some delays in obtaining the immobilization drugs needed for the translocations – only one zoo in India has permission from the government to obtain the drugs, and must import them on behalf of all zoos and protected areas in the country, including the IRV 2020 program. The IRV 2020 partners have made good progress in obtaining permission to begin importing the drugs needed for IRV 2020 through the State Zoo of Assam. The next set of translocations has been re-scheduled for November 2009, and we expect to have both the fence and the necessary immobilization drugs secured by that time. We plan to translocate 18 rhinos from Kaziranga and Pabitora to Manas later this year.