

Cozy up to the new normal with the newest edition of the Crash

1 message

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The Crash

Sept 2020 "The Fall Edition"

The IRKA newsletter: the leading network connecting rhino keepers.

President's Perspective

First and foremost I would like to congratulate Jason Faessler, from the Nashville Zoo, on being elected to the IRKA's Board of Directors. Jason has been a long time member of the IRKA and brings with him a great amount of experience, working with 4 species of rhinos. He will be a great addition to the team and I look forward to working with him on the board. I would also like to congratulate Dr. Chris Tubbs, from the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, on being elected for another 3 year term on the IRKA's Board of Directors. Chris has played a vital role on our team, serving as the Treasurer. He brings a different perspective of rhino management with his scientific background and has contributed not only to the IRKA, but to the industry as a whole. I would like to thank Amber Berndt, from the Indianapolis Zoo, who has served on the board for 3 years and contributed to our organization. Amber has a big heart for rhino conservation and played a big role in fundraising for conservation needs in both African and Asian countries. Nina Fascione, the new Executive Director of the International Rhino Foundation, has become an advisor to the IRKA BOD, joining Cece Sieffert, IRF's Deputy Director, and Adam Eyres, Fossil Rim's Animal Care Director and Rhino TAG Chair.



Due to the continuing global pandemic, the IRKA BOD held our annual meeting virtually this past August. It was a very unique meeting, but still very productive, discussing our current projects, challenges, and the future of the organization. One of main topics we discussed was the 2021 Rhino Keeper Workshop that was scheduled to be hosted by FOTA Wildlife Park, Ireland. With the uncertainty of these unprecedented times, we thought that the best decision would be to cancel the 2021 RKW. Without knowing what travel restrictions would be, financial hardships for zoological institutions, and to what degree the COVID-19 pandemic will persist at that time, we couldn't realistically continue the planning process. We hope things will return to normalcy, or close to it, by 2022, and plan for a RKW for that year. As things move forward, we will be sure to update the membership by the newsletter, website, and social media. Now that we will not be able to meet in person to discuss rhino management and conservation for a while, the IRKA plans to host numerous webinars to keep us all involved and up to date on the most modern rhino husbandry practices and conservation projects. The updates for these webinars will also be posted on all of our communication platforms.

World Rhino Day is only a few days away and I'm sure everyone is preparing to celebrate in your own way. This is a great day to share your knowledge about rhinos with your zoo/park guests and get them involved with rhino conservation. If you are hosting a World Rhino Day event at your institution, please share photos and videos with us so we can help showcase your hard work! As you are all aware, the global pandemic has not only hit zoological institutions hard, but the field programs as well. If there is anything you can do to help organizations such as the International Rhino Foundation, Save the Rhino, and Stop Rhino Poaching, please do. The folks out in the field greatly appreciate all the work you do and any assistance you would be able to give. The IRKA is holding our own World Rhino Day fundraiser to benefit the Rhino Protection Units in Indonesia. We will be selling a couple of limited edition IRKA masks, as well as hosting an online auction. Take a look at the IRKA website www.rhinokeeperassociation.org and our social media pages to purchase a mask and place a bid.

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Stay safe and Happy World Rhino Day!
-Joe

Correspondence

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It is with great regret that the International Rhino Keeper Association needs to announce the 2021 Rhino Keeper Workshop at FOTA Wildlife Park is **CANCELLED**.

*Thank
you!*

During these unprecedented times the Board of Directors decided to postpone further plans with FOTA to move forward with the workshop in the spring of 2021. With so many uncertainties about the future of travel, public gatherings, and financial support it feels inappropriate to ask anyone to invest their efforts into such an unknown.

We greatly appreciate all the work and enthusiasm FOTA has put into this so far!

IRKA hopes to enjoy their Irish hospitality when the world returns to some form of new normal.

2020 BOD Elections

Welcome our new board member!

Jason Faessler at Nashville Zoo

Jason is the primary rhino keeper in the hoofstock department at the Nashville Zoo. He has been working with white rhino at Nashville since they arrived in 2016. Over the last 19 years, he has worked with black, greater one horned, and Sumatran rhino. He has also worked with all forms of African and Asian hooved animals, as well as big cats, small mammals and birds. He has been an IRKA member since 2005, attending workshops in Columbus, Melbourne (presented), Denver, and Disney.



Congratulations to Joe Hauser and Chris Tubbs who have been elected to continue their service for IRKA

IRKA 2020 Rhino Conservation Fundraising Campaign:

Hey Everyone!!! We hope this finds you safe and relatively normal in this time of turmoil. Our fundraising campaign this year will have funds directed to a very important conservation project that is very close to IRKA's heart and mission.

IRKA is working in conjunction with the International Rhino Foundation to support the Sumatran Rhino Rescue Program and the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary keepers. This support will be with direct monetary donations and the professional development of the keepers through shared knowledge. This will help set the SRS keepers up for success as they care for one of the most critically endangered large mammals on

the planet. As rhino keepers, we could not think of a better way to involve ourselves, than to save a species that is on the very brink of extinction with less than 80 individuals left on earth.

The IRKA Board of Directors decided that 100% of the funds raised from our 2020 Rhino Fundraising Campaign will go to support the amazing men and women who ensure the safety of the most critically endangered rhinos on the planet, the incredible Indonesian Rhino Protection Units (RPU's).

If you would like to learn more about the rangers on this project, check out IRF's blog series below:

Celebrating 25 years of Rhino Protection

Limited Edition 2020 IRKA Face Mask:

With a pandemic on our hands this year, we asked ourselves what would be a more useful item for us to show our rhino LOVE and IRKA pride rather than a T-shirt? Well a limited edition face mask! Since, masks will be in our future for a while, why not wear one with style! We teamed up with amazing graphic artist Jason Eyre from Toronto, Canada to help us create a one of a kind design that was then sent to [Spoonflower.com](https://www.spoonflower.com) to print our own one of a kind limited edition rhino fabulous fabric!!

The masks are handmade using 100% - 2 layered cotton material (with Eco-friendly ink), nose piece and adjustable ear pieces. Easy to hand wash and dry for repeated wear. All proceeds from the masks will be going to support the Indonesian Rhino Protection Units and the incredibly important work that they have done for the last 25 years.

Masks will go on sale September 21st at 8 am (Eastern Standard Time) through October 5th! Cost for each mask is \$20.00 plus shipping. To order: go to our website <https://www.rhinokeeperassociation.org/> and click on the World Rhino Day button!



Don't forget the online auction ends Thursday, September 24!!

****only one day left to bid****
go to 32auctions.com/IRKAWRD

*IRKA had
a big year
in 2019!*

*Just look
what we
can do
working
together
for the love
of rhinos*

2019 IRKA Financial Report	
Expenses	
Scholarships and Keeper Development: \$8,730	
2019 RKW: \$25,873	
Fundraising: \$2,142	
Operations: \$2,547	
IRF Donations: \$24,000!!!	
Total: \$63,292	
Revenue	
Supporting Institutions and Donations: \$17,238	
Training Workshops: \$372	
RKW Registrations and Tickets: \$4,830	
Merchandise, Auctions, Corks for Conservation: \$19,182	
Total: \$41,622	
Balance as of 9/2020: \$84,799	

Enema and Ultrasound Training



At Disney's Animal Kingdom®, enemas and transrectal ultrasounds are a regular part of our white rhinos' routines. Ultrasounds have proven to be invaluable way of gathering information so that more informed management decisions can be made. While training plans and timelines may vary for each individual rhino, below are some general best practices that have been identified over the years.

Designate a Training Area

- A chute is ideal.
- Vertical bars are the safer option for rear access.
- Hydraulic chute with adjustable shoulder restraints recommended.
- Access to lukewarm water (~90 degrees F) is necessary when performing enemas.
- Having a designated enema hose available is advised. It should be cut with no jagged edges to the desired length and should have no nozzle attached.

Begin your training by making the chute a happy place! Enemas and ultrasounds are advanced behaviors and it will benefit both the trainer and the rhino if the rhino has a solid foundation of positive training sessions in the chute before integrating more stimuli. Asking for established foundation behaviors (i.e., mouth, target, head up, and back) can also increase the rhino and trainer's confidence in this space. If applicable, begin desensitizing the animal to the mechanics of the training area such as the shoulder restraints being squeezed down, doors opening and closing, etc. For the safety of the rhino, it is advised that the width of the chute is adjusted prior to the rhino entering the chute.

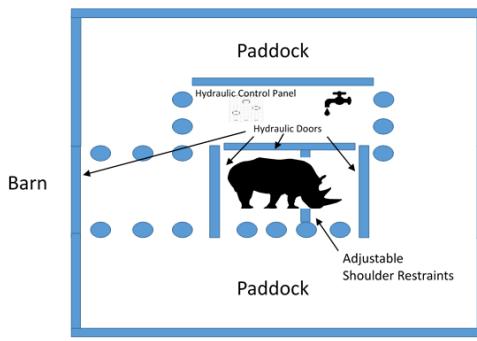


Figure 1. Disney's Animal Kingdom® Training Chute

When a rhino is readily participating in training sessions in the designated area, it is time to progress into administering enemas. During the following steps prioritize safety and reach out to managers, veterinarians, or other institutions if challenges arise during the training process.

Reinforcement Selection

Determine what reinforcers are available for the individual you are training and if any of them are a higher value reinforcer. Browsers have a more varied diet, which allows for more options for reinforcers. Produce and browse may be utilized, along with PZ and timothy cubes. Grazers such as white rhinos have a simpler diet. Food items such as PZ, timothy cubes, timothy hay, or other local hay varieties as determined by your local vet and/or

nutritionist are some options to try. We also have utilized tactile either by hand or with a deck brush, on the rhino's belly or inner thigh. Once you have determined the best reinforcers for the individual animals, decide how to integrate the reinforcers into your shaping plan.

- When first utilizing the newly designated training space, gauge the rhino's comfort level in the space to determine how the reinforcers will be utilized. It may be beneficial to extend the time that the rhino spends in the chute by simply intermittently feeding a high value food item until the rhino appears comfortable in the space for a longer duration.
- We have had success with utilizing a few pieces of PZ or a couple of timothy cubes for maintenance behaviors that are worked in the chute. When proceeding with the steps listed below, it is advised that the trainer starts to utilize higher value reinforcers
- For our sessions, we utilize primarily timothy hay while the rhino remains in the training space. We then use a handful or two of a high value reinforcer for the more invasive aspects of the enema and ultrasound, particularly when the hand or any tools are first inserted or removed. As the rhino's confidence with these procedures increases, the higher value reinforcer is phased out so that timothy is the primary reinforcement.
- Tactile has been very successful when paired with the high value reinforcer if the animal is particularly reactive to hand or tool insertion or removal.
- If an animal regresses in any step, consider taking a step back and reintegrate high value reinforcers for calm behavior up, but not including, the point of the breakdown. After a couple of sessions with calm behavior, move forward again and take care to bridge and reinforce immediately while the rhino is still exhibiting calm behavior.



Figure 1. Rhino positioning during ultrasound desensitization

* Photo taken backstage at Disney's Animal Kingdom®, do not duplicate



Figure 1. Positioning a rhino into the chute.

* Photo taken backstage at Disney's Animal Kingdom®, do not duplicate

Step 1 – The enema

- Pre-set the hose so that the water is already running and at the desired, lukewarm temperature.
- The designated trainer first positions the rhino into the desired position in the chute using behaviors such as target or back
- Desensitize the rhino to having multiple people in the area, working towards having a few people standing behind the animal in the chute.
 - o Introduce rear tactile, tail lift, and lubricant placed near the rectum.
 - o Introduce any novel sounds that may occur while keepers or vets are prepping for an enema or ultrasound- this may include the rustling of palpation gloves or the sound of tape being peeled off a roll and torn.
 - When the rhino is not reactive to people or external stimuli, start bringing the hose closer.
 - o Simply run the water near the chute to monitor the rhino's reaction to the sound. If the rhino shows no reaction, test the water to ensure that the temperature is still lukewarm.
 - o Introduce a low pressure stream of water onto the rhino's rear.
 - If all is going well, insert a generously lubricated, gloved hand up to the wrist.

**At this point, communication is key between the person giving the enema and the trainer. The trainer can bridge and give high value reinforcers for calm behavior, especially as pressure is applied to the rectum. Having a third party available that can give the rhino some tactile on the belly may be beneficial during this stage.*

- As the rhino's comfort level increases, work towards inserting the hose, using the hand cupped over any rough edges to guide the hose. The amount of hose you will need to feed into the rhino's rectum may vary by individual. Consult your veterinarians or managers regarding this step.
- Once the hose is in place, introduce the low-pressure stream of water. If any water starts to leak out, adjust the position of the hose to ensure a good seal.
- Once the rectal cavity has been filled, water will begin to pour out of the animal's rectum and the hose can be removed. Each enema will take a several minutes so ensuring the rhino's comfort for that duration is also important.
- After the enema, give the rhino access to the rhino's preferred defecation location. It can be helpful to leave a small amount of feces in the midden, or to simply encourage the animal to approach the area. If

the animal does not defecate immediately, encouraging the animal to walk around can be helpful. Once the animal defecates, bridge and reinforce. It can also be helpful to put this behavior on a verbal cue.

**It is worth noting that multiple enemas may be necessary to thoroughly clean the animal out and obtain clear ultrasound images. This may vary by animal and veterinary preference. Dependent on expertise of the staff and comfort levels of the rhino, some facilities may also manually extract fecal boluses.*

Step 2 – The ultrasound

- Bring the rhino back into the training area and reposition the animal into the chute. It may be helpful to back the animal up with their rear flush with the door, after the tail is lifted out of the way. Have the second keeper re-insert their hand and work up to inserting their arm up to the shoulder. For the rhino's comfort, be generous with lubricant. To simulate the sensations of an ultrasound, palpate with firm pressure in a sweeping motion along the pelvic floor.
- If feces is still detected, start to "manually evacuate" the rhino by using the hand to scoop feces out.
- Introduce the vet and start desensitization with any tools needed for the ultrasound, such as probe extender insertion and removal.
- Slowly extend the duration of the sessions according to vet needs. Some ultrasounds may last upwards of 20 minutes and the trainer should be closely monitoring the rhino's comfort and training food availability during the session.
-

****As suggested before, verbal communication between the vet and the trainer during the entirety of the procedure is key. We have found that rhinos are typically the most reactive to the hand as it first enters the rectum as well as for the probe extender insertion and removal. It may be beneficial to insert the probe extender in several small "pushes" while bridging and reinforcing for calm behavior with each push. The trainer also may find it useful to use foundation behaviors such as "mouth" or "target" to redirect the rhino's attention back to the trainer.*

Safety

Throughout the process, identifying critical safety points is essential. Before moving forward to the next step, ensure that keepers, managers, and vets are aware of any safety concerns. It is recommended that managers be present for the first enema and/or ultrasound desensitization. Those administering enemas and/or removing fecal boluses should be checked off by experienced staff. Ensure that the water is lukewarm and at an appropriate pressure before the hose is inserted into the rectum of the rhino.

**Andrea Swinehart
Disney's Animal Kingdom**

IT IS BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE...



IRF Forest Restoration: Updates from the field

At the beginning of 2020 IRKA made a donation of \$10,000 to IRF for their forest restoration project in Way Kambas. This donation was made possible by all of IRKA's members and supporters who participated in the online auction from World Rhino Day, online t-shirt sales and a generous donation from our friends at Horns and Heroes! Every shirt sold and auction item bid on helped make this possible!





2020 has been a rough year for everyone, and South East Asia is no exception. The COVID virus has had a large impact on the human population in Indonesia. Despite this blow to the country, the reforestation project is moving forwards with over 20 acres planted thus far. We are relieved to hear the team at the SRS is happy and healthy, and working in two separate teams to reduce risk of infection.



IRF reports they are starting to see the fruits of their labor as this patch of forest continues to heal. New cameras they recently placed have captured images for proof: dozens of species of birds, barking deer, Sambar deer, elephants, and even a tiger.

All the wildlife moving back in is a very welcoming sign!



*More information on the reforestation campaign from IRF.
<https://rhinos.org/reforestation/>*

Keeper Development Program in the time of Covid-19 a combination of passion and technology:



Denver Zoo has been one of the original institutional participants with the IRKA's Keeper Development Program since its inception, and have hosted several rhino keepers from other facilities over those years. In 2012, our exhibit Toyota Elephant Passage opened, and had several new unique features that were of great interest to fellow rhino keepers including our large rotational exhibits, water features and new barn design. Our exhibit also houses 1.1 Greater one-horned rhino which are a recommended breeding pair, but since our male had not reached sexual maturity it was decided to implement artificial insemination with our female to secure a pregnancy. With this new management plan, we then had to re-vamp our training program to incorporate our chute system and re-establish primary behaviors for a successful procedure. In November 2018, we performed our 12th AI procedure and pregnancy was confirmed through rectal ultrasound on day 28. On February 22nd 2020, we welcomed our first female GOH calf to the Denver Zoo.

In early November of 2019, Daniel Custar from Oklahoma City Zoo had put a request in to our KPD program to spend a few days with our Denver Zoo rhino team in Spring of 2020. Their facility was expecting a GOH calf in the fall of 2020,

and wanted to ensure that all bases were covered in preparation for the birth. Then the world and the U.S. were hit with a global pandemic turning everything upside down in every aspect in not only our personal lives, but in our careers as well. At first, we had hoped to just push out Daniel's visit from the spring to the end of August, but as cases rose across the country it was evident that some decisions would have to be made quickly. After a discussion with the executive members of the BOD's, the difficult decision to temporarily halt the Keeper Development Program was made to ensure everyone's safety. It was at this point, that I began to think of how technology could assist us in providing the information that would be as useful to our participants even though it would not be an in-person event.



So, having had to do several Zoom meetings to just socialize over the course of lock down it became pretty clear that we could pull off a different sort of KPD program using this platform. Daniel was totally up for this idea, so we planned on a meeting where his entire team and our team could get together to share information virtually. I started to pull all of our behavioral, physical and birth notes together into one document for easy access, as well as lots of photos and critical point videos of the labor and birth. Since our little female was truly a miracle birth – having been born ALIVE 2 hours after the amniotic sac rupture, it was crucial to share what we experienced. All of this information was sent before meeting to allow OKC team time to prepare for questions, etc.

On the day of meeting, we had some technical issues with our speaker working on our computer, but we quickly fixed that with speaker phone connection so that we could still see each other, but more importantly hear each other!!! Overall, it allowed us to actively participate in further education and collaboration which is the end goal of our Keeper Development Program. It proved to both our institutions that continued education and shared experiences could still be assessable with the use of technology. Sure, nothing can take the place of that in person visit to your facility, but virtual technology may be the only way to stay connected during these difficult times. Remember we still can make an impact with other rhino keepers if we just think outside the box!

**Chris Bobko, Rhino Keeper
Denver Zoo**



"2020 has been anything but a normal year, but our hunger for knowledge and passion for rhinos has not changed. This year, I was planning to visit the Denver Zoo to participate in the IRKA keeper exchange program. The Denver Zoo Team had a GOH calf in February and the Oklahoma City Zoo Team is expecting a calf this fall. This upcoming calf is the first for many of our team members, so I felt it was very important to gather as much information as possible on the birth process."

Unfortunately, like many things during this pandemic, these plans were cancelled. However, we decided to get creative in how we could still share this knowledge base between the two teams. We agreed to do a zoom call together and set a date to meet. Like any meeting with technology, there were technical difficulties. Once all the kinks were worked out, the Denver Rhino Team and OKC Zoo Team all gathered around to hear Denver share their experience. They were able to share how their birth went, what changes they would have made, and new ideas they have to improve their birth experience for the next calf. We had prepared a list of questions that we had about our upcoming birth and Denver was able to answer all of them. We asked about the birth timeline, how the birth was managed, and many other questions. We feel more prepared for this birth and cannot thank the Denver rhino team enough for their willingness to share their knowledge with us. Even though we are miles away, rhino keepers can continue to learn from each other and work together to provide the best possible care for this incredible species."

**Daniel Custar, Lead Rhino Caretaker
Oklahoma City Zoo**

**All in for Rhinos: 2019-2020
Emerging Wildlife Conservation
Leaders**

[Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders](#) (EWCL) is a skill-building program for early career professionals across different conservation sectors. Every two years, a cohort of 25 international participants is selected. The program provides networking opportunities and professional training, but ultimately culminates in the implementation of several new conservation campaigns in collaboration with established NGOs.

The 2019-2020 class is uniquely focused on addressing challenges related to rhino conservation. Divided into teams, we are supporting four of the world's five rhino species, including the greater one-horned rhino, Sumatran rhino, white rhino, and black rhino. Project objectives are summarized below, including ways that IRKA members can learn more or engage with these initiatives.



1. Protecting Habitat- Saving the Greater One-Horned Rhino

The GOH project group is partnered with [WWF India](#). They are working to create new tools that support habitat management efforts for greater one-horned rhinos in Assam, India. A major threat to GOH rhinos is the decline of suitable habitat, driven by invasive species, woody succession and waterhole degradation. Thus, high resolution habitat maps are a central deliverable for this project group, which will support the development of a habitat management plan in Manas National Park. The data included in the project maps will assist in categorizing the rate and distribution of grassland succession and invasive species, and changes in the composition of grassland-woodland-wetlands over time, thereby facilitating better decision-making and habitat management. You can follow their efforts via the [Habitat for One-Horned](#) Facebook Page or on Instagram @habitat4onehorned.

2. Community Engagement- Saving the Sumatran Rhino

The critically endangered Sumatran rhino is alarmingly close to extinction. Recently, the Government of Indonesia and several local and international NGOs have collaborated to increase breeding opportunities for those few remaining individuals. The EWCL Indonesian project group is partnered with the International Rhino Foundation (IRF). IRF is the primary funder for the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) in Way Kambas National Park, that manages a breeding population of Sumatran rhino. The team is working to create new conservation, marketing and engagement tools to targeted communities SRS. The primary goal is to increase local participation in habitat restoration and browse farming programs to support the Sanctuary rhinos. A few of the team's initiatives target global awareness for the species. Keep an eye on [International Rhino Foundation's](#) website in late September, where you can take a short personality quiz to 'Find Your Inner Sumatran Rhino'!



3. Combating Rhino Horn Trafficking - Saving the White Rhino

Criminal networks moving rhino horn from its source to the market are often coordinated by highly-efficient transnational organizations using complicated routes and methods to avoid detection and enforcement. Facing this daunting challenge, this EWCL project group is partnered with [United for Wildlife](#) an effort to address the poaching crisis. They are focusing on tools to combat horn trafficking, and diligently establishing an inventory of current rhino horn trafficking interventions.

This effort has them compiling various detection and/or enforcement tools, smuggling methods & trends, and current information-sharing systems. The final report will outline findings that will be shared with stakeholders to guide best practices, improve resource-sharing & efficacy. This group will also engage stakeholders by hosting a series of online workshops to discuss wildlife trafficking detection tools and best practices, with a focus on rhino horn trafficking. Take a look at [this short clip](#) regarding the recent focus on how the Covid-19 pandemic presents unique challenges and opportunities to reduce the demand for wildlife trade

4. Recognizing Rangers - Saving the Black Rhino

The frontline defense against poaching, wildlife rangers put their lives on the line every day. A 2016 survey of African rangers found that 82% had faced a life threatening situation at work and 59% did not feel they were provided with proper equipment or resources to ensure their safety. The EWCL black rhino group is partnered with [Global Wildlife Conservation](#) to develop a ranger recognition toolkit. In efforts to engage communication teams in global ranger support organizations and to encourage local government agencies to provide more direct support of rangers, the toolkit includes a campaign for #RangersDeserveMore. Recently, the [Universal Ranger Support Alliance](#) has partnered with the team to adopt this campaign. To learn more about this work, read [this interview](#) of the EWCL team after attending the World Ranger Congress.

The urgency of all rhino conservation efforts has been even more challenged by the unexpected global pandemic. The EWCL project groups have been constantly evolving their strategies, working creatively to deliver on their objectives in unique and impactful ways. Although originally scheduled to complete the program in December



2020, EWCL Class 8 has been extended until April 2021 to facilitate the final presentations of each project in person.



To learn more about the EWCL program, visit www.wildlifeleaders.org.

**Robyn Johnson
Disney's Animal Kingdom**

Facility Focus: Toronto Zoo, Toronto, Canada Meet our Greater one-horned rhinos



Situated on 710 acres within the Rouge National Park, the Toronto Zoo is nestled in the northeast of the City of Toronto, in Ontario, Canada. The Toronto Zoo is the largest zoo in Canada. Currently, the zoo houses over 5,000 animals, representing over 500 species. The city of Toronto provides financial support for the Zoo's operations. The Toronto Zoo has been designed to represent 7 zoogeographic regions of the world, including Indo-Malaya, Africa, Americas, Tundra, Eurasia, Australasia and Canada. The Toronto

Zoo currently houses 2 species of rhinoceros: 2.1 Greater onehorned rhino, located in the Indo-Malaya section of the zoo, and 2.2 Southern White rhino located in the Africa savannah region. The two rhino species are on opposite sides of the zoo, and as a result, each species have their own keeping staff. I am a part of an 11-person team in the Indo-Malaya section of the zoo. Our team cares for various species of birds, reptiles, fish, and mammals, which include our 2.1 GOH rhinoceros. As such, the GOH rhino will be featured for this Facility Focus.

We currently house 2.1 GOH rhino, a 17-year-old male (dad), a 15-year-old female (mom), and a 2 1/2 year old male calf, who is currently still living with mom. Our GOH barn was built in 1980, and it includes an indoor exhibit space that is 126.4 m² (1361ft²), and 4 indoor stalls. There is an outdoor exhibit attached to the barn that is 2205 m² (23736 ft²) in size, and contains a large natural mud/ clay wallow that the rhinos spend most of their summer days in, as well as a yard space that is 436 m² (4694 ft²) in size. The indoor exhibit also houses 2 cattle egrets that are free flying. They are a great help with fly control and are often seen beside the rhinos when they are resting, catching flies. In the 40-year history of housing GOH rhino, Toronto Zoo visitors have been treated to 5 GOH rhino calves and keepers have had the privilege to work with 2 different breeding pairs, 1.0 Patrick and 0.1 Indira (original pair) and 1.0 Vishnu and 0.1 Ashakiran (current pair). Covid-19, border restrictions, and continuing to house our two and a half year old calf for at least another year, is keeping our team from actively breeding our residing pair at this time. We have had 2 successful male calves born to our current pair through natural breeding's.



As with most facilities that house GOH rhino males, the Toronto Zoo has our share of foot issues. We have been battling chronic foot troubles for a number of years with our big male, but in 2015, a co-worker and I were fortunate enough to travel to the Rhino Keeper Workshop (RKW) in Chester, England, where we watched the most amazing presentation given by Dr. Friederike von Howald of Zoo Basel. She presented a paper showing how her team were able to really change their GOH rhino's foot issues by using a deep woodchip substrate (at least 50 cm (2') deep) for the rhinos to live on, which mimics the

softer, more giving substrates that GOH rhino can be found living on in the wild (alluvial savannah, grasslands and riverine forests). The positive changes she showed, gave our team some real hope for our male and his foot challenges. The Toronto Zoo was able to merge a deep wood chip substrate into the planned upgrade the indoor exhibit was scheduled for. Small plan revisions now allowed for over 50cm of hardwood chip (like Ash or Oak) to fill our indoor exhibit space, providing our rhinos with a very giving walking surface. If any of you are currently housing GOH rhino and are experiencing any foot issues, the Toronto Zoo's GOH rhino team cannot encourage you enough to reach out to us directly, or to other institutions using wood chip substrate to get more information. The new substrate, coupled with the outstanding care provided by our amazing veterinarian team, is making a world of difference to our adult male's feet and to his quality of life. Our GOH rhinos are actively involved in a training and enrichment program at the Zoo, as well as many opportunities for guest engagement, during our daily keeper talks, behind the scene tours for donors, and Wild Encounter program, where our guests are able to see the rhinos in a closer proximity, interacting with keepers, getting fed and the ability to have hands on contact with our rhinos (* these programs have been halted or altered currently due to Covid-19).



Housing GOH rhino in a Northern climate can create some challenges that more Southern climates might not face. Heating the barn in the winter can really dry out the rhinos skin. The heat erases any humidity in the building, and to compensate for that we had our maintenance department build us a misting system that we had placed on the ceilings in each of the rhino stalls that we can leave running overnight to provide a fine mist and the much needed humidity that has really alleviated the dry skin problems. We often find the rhinos lying under the misters, staying nice and wet. We are very proud and thankful to the Toronto Zoo's Nutrition Center and Staff who work very hard to ensure our GOH rhinos have access to browse all year round. The Toronto Zoo has recently acquired a tree farm, which has allowed for the collection of even more browse for all of our zoo's browsing species. These trees are not only fed fresh in the summer time, but also are harvested and packaged as silage for feeding in the winter time. Toronto Zoo silage is made up of either willow, poplar or apple browse. Branches are cut to fit into large plastic drums that are airtight. The browse material is compressed inside of the barrel to remove as much oxygen as possible. It is then sealed and allowed to ferment. Being able to provide this important nutritional component to the rhinos in the wintertime is a huge challenge to zoos located in northern climates, and we are thankful this program is so successful – the rhinos are too!

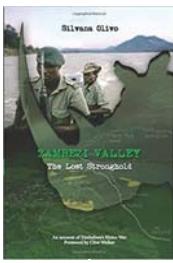


*For more information about deep wood chip substrate, or the Toronto Zoo's Browse/Silage program, feel free to contact:
asnowie@torontozoo.ca*

**Angie Snowie
 Toronto Zoo**

Book Review
ZAMBEZI VALLEY: The Last Stronghold
 by Silvana Olivo

Zambezi Valley – The Lost Stronghold testifies to the dedication of those who fought against all odds to protect Zimbabwe's Zambezi Valley, considered in the



1980s the last stronghold for the greatest concentration of wild black rhinos in Africa. The war against poachers by heroic Game Scouts and Rangers, who risked their lives for very little in exchange, was led in Zimbabwe by the initiator of Operation Stronghold, Glenn Tatham. With a foreword by Clive Walker, this account is the result of the author's personal involvement in the campaign run by Zimbabwe's National Parks Department almost thirty years ago, when, at 21, she became its official Italian chapter for half of the decade-long Operation Stronghold. The pace of the emergency unfolds in Silvana's story through the direct reporting of experiences in the field – the aftermath of shoot-outs with poachers, the translocation and dehorning of rhinos – and the documentation of the crisis at various levels, from Parks field stations to rhino management decisions. Saving the last rhinos was made harder by severe economic and political constraints, and also by adverse international public opinion due to the so-called shoot-to-kill policy and the controversial management of elephants. When Zimbabwe became a full-blown dictatorship and its economy imploded, politics infiltrated National Parks and rhino conservation remained possible only in vast, private conservancies and smaller, heavily guarded state parks. Describing Zimbabwe's visionary conservation policies of the time, the account testifies to the complexities of conservation in Africa.

"This is the fascinating true story of the efforts to protect the last of the rhinos in the Zambezi Valley. The collaborations, frustrations and overall dedication of those involved was inspiring for me and my imagination was captured by the events that brought some of the founding members of southern black rhino population. Packed full of detailed accounts and descriptions of legendary names in african conservation, this is a dense read and would be perfect for social distancing in the longer fall evenings"

-Jade Tuttle

Did you know the IRKA has a blog?!!

We have recently added a blog spot on our website.

Stay up-to-date with the latest new from all our members, including special births, professional development opportunities, workshop details and more.

[Sign up below to follow our blog!](#)

BLOG

IRKA Membership Dues Update:

Over the last several months, we have seen unprecedeted times in our country and across the world with Covid-19. All of our zoological institutions have been affected during this time with closures, lay-offs and just uncertainty facing a global pandemic. At this point in time, most of us are just now starting to re-open our facilities once again, but it looks much different than at the start of 2020. The IRKA BOD directors would like to help ease some of the stress and burden that we all have faced by waving all of our membership dues until the first of 2021. This includes all levels of membership and our conservation partners. It is our true hope that 2021 will bring peace, hope and of course RHINOS to each and every one of IRKA's outstanding members! We also extend our best wishes as our facilities re-open to our guests across the country and world.

Remember we are essential, so stay safe out there everyone!!

Christine Bobko
Vice President IRKA



Correspondences

Births:

San Diego Zoo Safari Park ---- white rhino
Cincinnati Zoo & botanical garden ---- male black rhino
Auckland Zoo ---- female white rhino
Monarto Safari Park ---- female white rhino

Deaths:

Caldwell Zoo ---- female black rhino "[Kizuri](#)"
Sedgwick County Zoo ---- male black rhino "[Klyde](#)"
Lincoln Park Zoo ---- male black rhino "[Maku](#)"

Transfers:

Riverbanks Zoo received "[Winnie](#)" from Busch Gardens
Riverbanks Zoo received "[Kande](#)" from Jacksonville Zoo
Buffalo Zoo received "[Lulu](#)" from Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

New Habitats:

Riverbanks Zoo & Gardens converted old elephant exhibit to a white rhino habitat
Buffalo Zoo converted old elephant exhibit to black rhino habitat

New Members

Haidee Taylor ----- Zoo SSA-Monarto, Au.
Amanda Mossor ----- Central Florida Zoo
Sierra Smith ----- Tanganyika Wildlife Park
Sarah Neuland ----- Buffalo Zoo



Conservation Partners are conservation organization or zoological institution which supports rhino conservation in accordance with the objectives and purpose of the IRKA. These partnerships often provide discounts for the supporting institution . It is important that as the IRKA grows we continue to garner the support from all facilities that are responsible for the protection and management of rhinoceros. We would like to extend our appreciation for the support from the following institutions, and hopefully we can add your zoo to this growing list! If you or your institution are interested in becoming a

Conservation Partner, please visit:

[Support IRKA](#)

**Platinum
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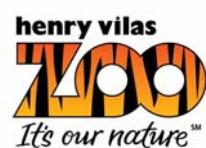


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