

**Spring is here (finally!), and the newest edition of the Crash**

1 message

**IRKA** <internationalrhinokeeperassoc@gmail.com>  
Reply-To: internationalrhinokeeperassoc@gmail.com  
To: rhinorrc@gmail.com

11 May 2021 at 16:45



# The Crash

## April 2021 "Spring Edition"

**The IRKA newsletter: the leading network connecting rhino keepers.****President's Perspective**

Even there have been a lot of things that we have learned from this past year, and one of them was to be willing to change and still achieve the goals we have set forward. The newest successful change the IRKA had this year was the development of the monthly webinars. Amy Hays, from Lion Country Safari, wrote about how the webinars has inspired her to take on new challenges with her rhinos. We have had a great start to the webinar series and we have a tentative agenda planned for the rest of the year. Take a look in this newsletter to see what is planned for the following months. Lisa Brott, from the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, took the initiative to start up the Keeper Information Exchange System (KIES) to help the IRKA members collaborate and share ideas. There is now a live Google form where you can sign up to get involved and become that part of the process. Check out her article to see how to join.



As many of us know, black rhinos can certainly have their challenges, and one of them is to be intergraded into a semi-social setting under managed care. Kayla Freeman, from the Blank Park Zoo, wrote about how they went about introducing their 3 female black rhinos in the same enclosure. Kayla and her team at Black Park were able to learn about the success that the Cleveland Metro Zoo had with their black rhinos and duplicate that at their own facility. This is an amazing accomplishment, especially with this species! Keep up the great work Blank Park Zoo!

The Vice President of the IRKA, Chris Bobko, has always been on the forefront of our fundraisers, and this year was no exception. Chris Bobko, along with Angie Snowie, took on the challenge of fundraising during a pandemic. With the help of fellow keepers producing the IRKA masks, and everyone that has purchased a mask for this cause, contributed to the \$4,500 raised to help support the Rhino Protection Units in Indonesia. Chris didn't stop there though. She made another 31 masks to send to the RPU's and staff at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary. Thank you, Chris, Angie, and everyone else for contributing to rhino conservation in Indonesia!

Giving rhinos enrichment on a daily basis has always been a priority, but coming up with new ideas isn't always the easiest. Nicole Richter, from Disney's Animal Kingdom, worked with her team to develop very unique and creative ways to enrich their rhinos. Not only were they creative, but they kept natural behaviors in mind while they developed their new enrichment items. I definitely encourage you to take a look at Nicole's article to see what her team was able to achieve and maybe get a few ideas for your rhinos.

The IRKA Board of Directors will be meeting later in May and will discuss what the next year will bring our organization. I know many of you are curious about Rhino Keeper Workshops, the Keeper Development Program, Training and Enrichment Regional Seminars, future fundraisers, and more. Hopefully we will have a better understanding in the following months on what the IRKA will be able to pursue. Stayed tuned to the IRKA website, social media, and newsletters for future updates!

**Table of Contents:****President's Perspective**  
Joe Hauser**New KIES program**  
Lisa Brott**Increasing the Crash**  
at Blank Park Zoo  
Kayla Freeman**SRS Face Masks**  
Chris Bobko**IRKA Webinars**  
Amy Hays**Enrichment Ideas**  
Nicole Richter**Book Reviews:**  
Remembering Rhinos**Correspondence**  
**New Members**  
**Conservation Partners**

-Joe

## NEW KIES! Keeper Information Exchange System

### *Hello Rhino Enthusiasts!*

We are introducing an exciting **new** program for the membership called KIES, the Keeper Information Exchange System. KIES enables members to network and communicate without the use of social media for the sole purpose of rhino care management. We have put a live Google document together that will be updated by members and conservation partners who would like to have the opportunity to exchange information. In filling out your name, institution, email, and area of expertise with the species of rhino(s) you have worked with you are agreeing to be contacted by other members who may have questions for your areas of knowledge! I have contacted a few keepers already and inputted their information to the shared document, but we ask that you take a look and continue to fill out your area of expertise if you would like to participate. Some professionals will have points of contact. For example, Joe Hauser will be the point person for Dr. Michael Lowder, equine and exotic animal dentist, and; Robyn Johnson will be the contact person for the nutritionist at DAK. Feel to contact individuals on the list via emails with questions you may have! Clarice (Reese) Pfalzer and I will be overseeing our KIES program so please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or need to get in touch with someone specific. We look forward to this new program and hope all of you will utilize KIES as we continue to share our knowledge and learn together!

**Lisa Brott**  
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo

[KIES sign in](#)

### Increasing the Crash at Blank Park Zoo



Blank Park Zoo, in Des Moines, Iowa, is currently home to four Eastern Black Rhinos: one male (Kiano) and three females (Ayana, Tumani, and Kamara). We received our breeding pair, Kiano and Ayana, in late 2012 and they have been very successful! In fall 2016, Ayana gave birth to Tumani, with Kamara following in spring 2019. We had received a recommendation for Tumani, but due to limitations on animal transports impacted by Covid-19, we were unable to transport her to her new home. Now housing three females, we began brainstorming indoor housing solutions for the winter months when outdoor space would be limited. After much care and research, we decided to begin introductions with the three females. Cleveland MetroParks Zoo had done this successfully and the team felt confident that this process would go smoothly at Blank Park Zoo as well.



Our outdoor exhibits allow for constant visual and tactile access to each other which gave us an advantage. Prior to the first introduction, we had several meetings with the director of animal care and our vet team to make sure we had everything in place. We gathered appropriate materials such as extinguishers, hoses, distraction items, and high reinforcement food items in the case the introduction didn't go as planned. We established separation criteria so all of our team involved knew when to separate and when to hold off. We decided to complete introductions before zoo hours on weekdays so there were less guests. The day before introductions, we gave each group of rhinos access to the north and south exhibits so they were familiar with the setup. We made sure all exhibit shift gates were open so they could complete loops in the exhibit and eliminate any dead ends.



Our first introduction occurred August 18, 2020, between Tumani and Kamara. After 20 minutes of unremarkable interactions, we shifted Ayana onto exhibit. All three rhinos stood in the center of the south exhibit alert for several minutes, before all three began running through both exhibits. The following 20 minutes were spent investigating the exhibits together calmly. The next introduction occurred August 24 for a total of two hours. The first interactions seen were Kamara bluffing at Tumani when she came too close. During this time, Ayana consumed hay nearby. Ayana is fairly laid back, so she allowed Tumani and Kamara time to figure out their social dynamic without causing any extra aggression. All three rhinos were seen consuming hay in close proximity several times throughout the remainder of the introduction. On August 25 and 26, the introductions lasted 6 hours. From 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, they spent the majority of the time in close proximity consuming hay or standing. There were several bouts of playful sparring between Tumani and Kamara. They rested in close proximity from approximately 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM. After August 26, all three rhinos were given access to both yards daily during the zoo's open hours. On September 1, the team began overnight access, allowing the group to be together at all times of the day. On September 8, we gave the females access to only the south yard as they spent the majority of their time there. This allowed for Kiano to have access to the north yard. On October 17, all three females were given indoor access to four stalls for the first time.



Overall, introductions went incredibly well! The only aggression seen was during initial shifting into the stalls over their diet. We began spreading their diet throughout the stalls in feeders to mitigate this. Throughout this process, behavioral observations were completed using Zoomonitor, a web-based app developed through Lincoln Park Zoo. Overall data from observations completed showed that the majority of the time, the three rhinos spent time consuming hay, standing or laying down in touch or close proximity. We hope to share our experiences to better understand the socialization of black rhinos and increase our welfare and management practices. We have successfully managed our crash this way and will continue to do so until we are able to find new homes for the calves!

**Kayla Freeman**  
Blank Park Zoo



IT IS BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

*It's the Small Things.....*



When the pandemic hit in 2020, we all were thrust into new behaviors that would become our new "normal". It's funny how something as small and simple as a mask had now become a crucial link to keeping yourself and other's safe. For that reason, IRKA Fundraising Committee decided that our World Rhino Day fundraiser would be a special limited-edition mask that could be useful and fun for such daunting times.

We had the special print designed with a black and Sumatran rhino together to represent the most critically endangered rhinos that we are fighting to help save. Sumatran rhinos are now part of IRKA's conservation mission directly supporting IRF and the Sumatran Rhino Rescue Program and the government of Indonesia. Our funds of \$4,500 raised this past year went to support the crucial work of the Rhino Protection Units in Indonesia - helping to save and protect the Sumatran and Javan rhinos.



With the pandemic, supplies in general and of course personal protection equipment was bad all over, but made much worse in countries with less resources. The other crucial group of dedicated individuals that were in need or our help was the staff at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas. We decided that another round of masks would be made for each one of the staff members, and of course for our beloved Inov and donated from IRKA. Once again, I asked my fellow keeper Amanda Faliano and her wonderful mother Jill to roll up their sleeves and make 31 more masks.... Being the amazing people that they are – the masks were made within a week and they only charged \$40.00. Unfortunately, the Christmas rush came on with packages and we had to wait a little bit to safely ship the masks to ensure they got all the way to Indonesia without getting lost.

They finally arrived in the hands of Inov in early February, and were handed out to the staff on February 28th. The staff was so happy to receive this gift of masks!!! The photos we received of them wearing the masks brought so much joy to our hearts. Honestly, it's the small things we do for each other that can truly have an extraordinary impact. It was so good to know that the passionate and dedicated staff at SRS had at this cool and reusable protection device that truly was made with **LOVE**.

**Chris Bobko**  
The Denver Zoo



**THANK YOU ALL FOR SUPPORTING  
THIS EFFORT!**

[Have you been keeping up with the rhino webinars?](#)

With the pandemic keeping most of us from being able to gather, the IRKA webinars are not only a great way to see our fellow rhino colleagues and friends but also a great way to



continue to improve our quality of care for those precious rhinos in our management. For me, I have also found the webinars leaving me inspired to take on new challenges! I am currently trying to train a 52 year old male white rhino with a limited training background, an open mouth behavior. We don't have to talk about how well that's going... let's just say it's a work in progress!

A huge thank you to our IRKA team for putting these webinars together and our speakers for sharing their wisdom with us! If you missed the last couple webinars, in January we heard an update from Dr. Chris Tubbs and Jonnie Capiro on the Northern White Rhino Initiative at San Diego Wildlife Alliance. Dr. Chris Tubbs provided us an informative talk about all the science and research he and his team have been putting into bringing back the Northern White Rhinos. From stem cells to genetic diversity, he left us fascinated and hopeful for the future. Jonnie Capiro gave us a great presentation on all the amazing training she and her team at the Rhino Rescue Center are doing with their rhinos that make all of this possible. In March we had a fantastic webinar with Dr. Michael Lowder about rhino dentistry. Dr. Lowder gave us all the information we need to assess and provide the rhinos in our care with the best dental health we can.

*Thank you again to our IRKA team for the time they put into organizing these webinars among other member resources and for the presenters for taking the time to participate in them. Don't forget to stay tuned for April's webinar!*

**Amy Hays**  
Lion Country Safari

#### **These are the tentative topics lined up:**

April --- rhino immobilizations  
May --- rhino nutrition  
June --- IRF job & updates  
July --- rhino TAG updates  
August --- assisted reproduction  
Sept --- geriatric care  
Oct --- bachelor groups

**It is a way for us to continue to connect and learn together.**

### **Enrichment Ideas**

As keepers, we spend 90% of our day completing tasks that will increase the welfare of the animals in our care. Some tasks may take longer than others, some are more physical, and some tasks are things that cater to an animal's natural behaviors. Sometimes, all of those things come together. You know what I'm talking about – enrichment. The creative beast of the zookeeping world.



The enrichment process can be simple, complicated, or sometimes both. What seems to be an easy concept can quickly turn into a tornado of tools, firehose, and hardware. As our knowledge of a species continues to deepen, so does the way in which we enrich them. Using the species' natural behavior to set a goal, plan, design and build enrichment varies from animal to animal. Creating enrichment for the white rhinos here on East Savanna at Disney's Animal Kingdom® is completely different than enriching the black rhinos across the park. Below are three different enrichment devices that were built to solicit three different behaviors from the white rhino herd: horn work, sparring, and self-maintenance tactile behaviors. All of these enrichment devices have been created using leftover or recycled materials!



#### **1. Firehose Sparring Device**

##### **Behavior: Sparring**

This device was created from recycled firehose and hardware (nuts, bolts, and washers).

Construction details can be found on the Hose2Habitat website (<https://www.hose2habitat.org/>). As a big enrichment device with a lot of firehose cubes to make – we used the opportunity to build this as a team for our male rhino's 24th birthday.

## 2. Busy board

### Behavior: Horn Work

This board was created to encourage the rhinos to work their horns on different surfaces. We designed the board to be large enough to attach many recycled items to give the option of different textures for horn working. This board was created with firehose, plastic board, metal pipes, boomerballs, and anything else we could get our hands on. This can be made with any rhino safe leftover items you can find around your barns. We have also, on occasion, given the rhinos access to a sprinkler so they have the option to get their horn wet before using the busy board since that is a preferred condition in which we have observed them working their horns



## 3. Three-tiered hanging brush

### Behavior: Self-maintenance, Tactile, and sparring

This brush design was created with the intention of having the rhinos rub up against it for self-maintenance tactile behaviors. The herd seems to enjoy the hard bristled brushes for this type of behavior. Luckily for us, this brush also encourages another behavior. The rhinos have also been observed sparring with the brush on occasion. The length of the brush provides enough momentum to swing, but the weight of the brush keeps it slow. The supplies needed to build this item are: PVC pipe, hardware, and brushes.

Enrichment has been one of the most rewarding parts of my career as a zookeeper. It challenges me to think outside the box in order to design and build something that will encourage the rhinos to engage in species appropriate behaviors. Sometimes the original design doesn't encourage the anticipated behaviors. I like to tell myself that is okay, even when I've spent hours and hours on a project, because it still tells me new information about their behavior. Adjusting these ideas with the new information helps me create other enrichment strategies to meet the goal behaviors. At the end of the day, I'm thankful because they are usually easier to enrich than our female cheetah. :D

Nicole Richter  
Disney's Animal Kingdom®

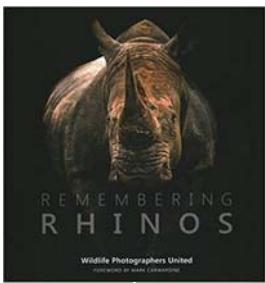


*Images Property of The Walt Disney Company. Cannot be repurposed without permission. Photos taken in off-exhibit holding area.*

Book Review  
Remembering Rhinos  
Margot Raggett

*The stunning second book in the Remembering Wildlife charity series.*

The aim of the creators is to make the most beautiful photographic book ever seen on a species and to use that to raise awareness of the plight facing that animal and also funds to protect it.



Features images generously donated by many of the world's top wildlife photographers.

All profits from the sale of this book will be donated to projects working to protect rhinos in Africa. Conservationists find themselves in an increasingly desperate race against time to save many species of wildlife from extinction.

Though the global population explosion is a huge factor, all too often it is money and ignorance that are the main causes of the demise. Sadly, this is certainly the case when it comes to rhinos, whose horns, made of useless keratin, are worth their weight in gold on the black market. They are being poached towards extinction, often with brutal consequences.

## 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 news 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:**

2020 was an unprecedented year for all and IRKA wanted to support our membership during the uncertainty by waiving dues. We have taken this opportunity to restructure our membership process.

**Moving forward, all membership payments will be due in January.**

Reminders will be sent during our annual membership drives, and as always new members are welcome year round!

*If you have any questions, please contact: [jade.tuttle@nczoo.org](mailto:jade.tuttle@nczoo.org).*

## **Correspondences**

### **Births:**

**The Wilds** -- 2 male whites "[Mo-Joe](#)" & "[Akagera](#)" & female white "[Binti](#)"  
**Safari Zoo** -- Male white  
**Wrocrow Zoo** --Female GOH  
**Lee Richardson Zoo** -- Male Eastern black "[Ayuba](#)"  
**Sedgwick County Zoo** -- Male Eastern black "[Ki](#)"  
**Taronga Western Plains Zoo** -- Female southern black  
**White Oak Conservation** -- Male southern black "[Rocky](#)"  
**Zoo Miami** -- Male eastern black

### **Deaths:**

**Zoo Miami** -- Male black rhino "[Toshi](#)" oldest rhino in US he as 44 years old  
**Dvur Kralove Zoo** -- Female black rhino "[Jessi](#)"

### **Transfers:**

**San Antonio Zoo** received male white rhino "[Stormy](#)" from **North Carolina Zoo**  
**Jacksonville Zoo & Gardens** received "[Kipenzi](#)" from **Zoo Tampa**

### New Members

Rebecca Filippini-----Indianapolis Zoo  
Alyson Goodwin-----Riverbanks Zoo  
Jack Gradidge-----Folly Farms Zoo  
Amy Hays-----Lion Country Safari  
Robyn Jackson-----Disney's Animal Kingdom  
Alberto Rodriguez-----Zoo Leon  
Alexandra Trujillo-----Henry Doorly Zoo  
Rob Krywalski-----Buffalo Zoo  
Lisa Smith-----Buffalo Zoo  
Kurt Volle-----Buffalo Zoo  
Michael Troiano-----San Diego Zoo  
Asha Natividad-----San Diego Zoo  
Rachel McCann-----Chester Zoo  
Beth Phethean-----Yorkshire Wildlife Park  
Corissa Mangus-----Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo  
Ben Meendering-----Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo  
Josiah House-----Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo  
Tara Warner-----Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo  
Craig Stevens-----The Rhinory  
Ben Thomas-----Denver Zoo  
Sara Whitman-----Denver Zoo  
Jessica Adamcheck-----Disney's Animal Kingdom  
Ellie Milnes-----Toronto Zoo



Conservation Partners-----**Henry Doorly Zoo**

**Denver Zoo**

**Disney's Animal Kingdom**

**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 Conservation Partners



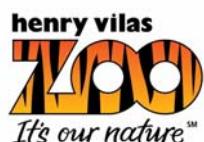
IRKA Partners



SAN DIEGO ZOO  
GLOBAL.



## 2021 Conservation Partners



## Conservation Sponsors



IRKA | C/O Busch Gardens-Sara Wunder, 3605 E . Bougainvillea Ave., Tampa , FL 33612

Unsubscribe [rhinorrc@gmail.com](mailto:rhinorrc@gmail.com)

Update Profile | Constant Contact Data Notice  
Sent by internationalrhinokeeperassoc@gmail.com powered by



Try email marketing for free today!