



The Crash

September 2022 "Fall Edition"

The IRKA newsletter: the leading network connecting rhino keepers.

President's Perspective

It's finally September, and you know what that means! Some people might say cooler weather, some may say football (ok, I say that one too), but us rhino folks gear up for World Rhino Day! The IRKA is holding our annual World Rhino Day fundraiser and selling customized IRKA neck gators. Be sure to check them out and purchase a few before the sale ends. The membership always pulls through with their support and we end up donating a significant amount to the International Rhino Foundation in support of the Sumatran Rhino Rescue.

I would like to welcome our newly elected board member, Pat Fountain, the Animal Care Supervisor at Blank Park Zoo. You may have met Pat at one of the Rhino Keeper Workshops, or may have seen his presentation at the Disney RKW. If you haven't met Pat yet, make sure you introduce yourself to him at the 2023 RKW, hosted by The Wilds.

Speaking of the Rhino Keeper Workshop, the early registration rates end October 1st! Make sure to hop on the IRKA website and take advantage of the early bird rates while they last. I hope to see many of you at the workshop! As many of you know, Chris Bobko, one of the IRKA's founding board members and the current Vice President, is now at the newly established, Rhinory, located in Fredericksburg, TX. Check out Chris's article on the one-of-a-kind winery, to see what all she has been able to do at a brand-new rhino facility. She explains how it all started and what it has become since their first rhino arrived. If anyone is ever down in Texas, you will definitely want to stop by Chris's new digs for a visit.

If you haven't heard yet, the IRKA is offering a new volunteer program to get members more involved with the IRKA and the International Rhino Foundation. We will often get questions on how members can get more involved. This is the perfect opportunity to get involved in different aspects of both organizations. Please reach out to Jason Faessler if you are interested in helping out.

As we learn more about rhinos, we want to make any necessary changes to benefit their wellbeing. That is exactly what Chad Harmon and his team have done at the Woodland Park Zoo for their greater one-horned rhinos. They have really invested to the best welfare possible for the GOH rhinos in their collection by renovating their barn and exhibit to accommodate wood chip



Table of Contents:

President's Perspective

Joe Hauser

Welcome Pat Fountain

Election results

TERS Recap

Sierra Smith

WRD Fundraiser

GOH mulching

Chad Harmon

The Rhinory

Chris Bobko

IRKA Volunteer Program

Jason Faessler

2023 RKW!!!

Dates and Details

Book Review:

Game Ranger on Horseback

Lane Batot

Correspondence

New Members

Conservation Partners

flooring. The rhinos have already made improvements with their foot conditions by being on the correct substrate and it's all due to the commitment of their keepers and staff that made those changes to the rhino habitat. I don't want to be a spoiler, but you may learn more about what Woodland Park has done for their GOH rhinos at the 2023 RKW.

Happy World Rhino Day!

Joe Hauser

2022 B.O.D Elections

WELCOME Pat Fountain!

Pat Fountain is the Animal Care Supervisor at the Potter Park Zoo. Pat has worked with Eastern black rhinos for over 15 years. During his time there, he has helped create the rhino training program, established the zoo's yearly world rhino day event, and overseen the zoo's first successful breeding and birth of a rhino calf. Pat has attended rhino keeper workshops in Chester, Denver, and Disney. He has presented at two conferences, one on treating a black rhino with a seizure disorder, and one on foot work training in Eastern black rhino.



Congratulations to Christine Bobko, Robyn Johnson, and Jade Tuttle on their re-elections to the Board



**2022
T.E.R.S.**



On September 7th and 8th, Tanganyika Wildlife Park in partnership with Sedgwick County Zoo hosted the third ever Training and Enrichment Regional Seminar. We had 16 participants from 14 different facilities across the United States join us. We started the seminar with breakfast and introductions to help everyone get acquainted. We then made our way to the barns to do some GOH and White rhino training. Some of the behaviors that were demonstrated were foot presentations with front feet, chute training, and rectal ultrasound training (three attendees even got to perform a rectal ultrasound on our GOH female!). Participants got to see our brand new safari barn that houses our five new white rhinos. After training, we jumped into the enrichment building. Our chief of innovation created three interactive enrichment items (the rhino presses a button which then activates anything you can plug into a wall!) for us to build then raffle off! We ended day one with facility presentations. On day 2, we started the day with a training workshop hosted by Animals Amplified. The rest of the day was spent at Sedgwick County Zoo where participants were able to see Black rhino and African elephant training. Some of the

behaviors attendees got to see with the rhino were foot presentations, line up, and training for AIRS. Then they got to see trunk washes, heart ultrasound, and many other behaviors with the elephants. Participants also got to tour the behind the scene areas of the rhino and elephant barns.



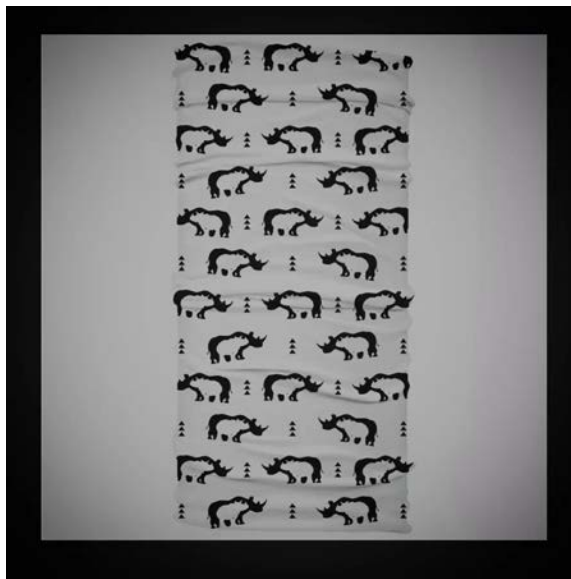
It is a special feeling being able to sit in a room surrounded by people who love rhinos and dedicate their lives to them. It was wonderful to get the opportunity to network with rhino professionals from all over the U.S. All of the participants were very enthusiastic and seemed very invested in the seminar from start to finish. A special thank you to IRKA and all of those who took part in helping make this seminar happen!

Sierra Smith
Tanganyika Zoo

If you and your zoo would like to host a TERS in 2024, please contact:
jade.tuttle@nczoo.org

IT IS BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

IRKA World Rhino Day Fundraiser
Neck Gator



This year's fundraising campaign is a unique and custom designed gator/buff that can be worn a variety of ways including in summer and winter. We are really happy to work with Free Sunshields in making this useful and cool outerwear for our members!

This year again we will be supporting the **Sumatran Rhino Rescue** and **International Rhino Foundation**. Let's celebrate the success of the birth of the newest member of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary by wearing a custom designed gator!



Image courtesy of the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry

**Sales will be from September 22nd -
October 3rd**

**Please share the link with your friends and family. Let's show our
rhino LOVE!**

**Orders will be taken directly at the link listed below - orders will
ship direct to you at the end of the campaign. IRKA's custom link
can be found at:**

[Purchase](#)

A Chip in their Armor:
the story of a Greater One-Horned Rhino's
substrate needs



In the Fall of 2020, Rhino keepers at Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ) began to see odd behaviors from their 4-year-old male Greater One Horned Rhino (GOHR), Taj. When standing in front of a food bowl or manger, Taj would pick up his rear feet one at a time. This weight shifting behavior was not observed in his enclosure mate, Glenn--a male GOHR of the same age. Eventually, Taj's behavior--dubbed "toe touching"--occurred every time he was feeding and, more often, he would toe touch with his right rear foot. Toe touching soon morphed into a more severe behavior. Taj would pick up his rear leg and kick back quickly. Keepers interpreted this as a sign of pain and Taj was started on the NSAID Firocoxib for pain management.



Animal keepers used all available resources, and then some, to investigate the cause of these clinical signs. Dr. Friederike Von Houwald, formerly representing Zoo Basel, had the answer: Taj was experiencing the initial stages of Chronic Foot Disease (CFD). This disease is characterized by abnormal nail growth, pad and hoof cracks, thinning of the hoof pad, and pain in the feet. CFD occurs in approximately 28% of the captive GOHR population. Though we do not understand why some GOHRs get CFD and others do not, we do know that hard substrates are a leading cause. Even rubber substrates are thought to be harmful.



Toe pointing behavior



Taj right rear foot

The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) sets standards for GOHR requiring a substrate of at least a 50-centimeter depth of wood chips. This substrate mimics the environment that GOHRs naturally occupy--riverine flood plains, soft ground. As the rhinos walk on this surface, their foot displaces the chips to allow their weight to be appropriately distributed onto their toes rather than their hoof pads. Zoo Basel's GOHR exhibit consists of beech chips. Living in the Pacific Northwest means lots of trees, but not very many hard woods. WPZ wanted to provide chips that would be safe to ingest when the rhinos inevitably took a sample. After reaching out to multiple mills, keepers were able to source maple and alder chips from a small mill in northwest Oregon.

With full support to improve the housing of GOHRs, WPZ allocated a construction budget to give the rhinos the substrate needed to correct foot issues. The estimated timeline for the project was one year, but Taj needed the appropriate substrate ASAP. In the spring of 2021, a contractor was hired to till the sandy yard substrate to loosen and "fluff up" the hard surface of the yards. This process temporarily provided softer substrate which reduced the severity of Taj's kickbacks, but his toe touching persisted.

To get the barn ready in time for winter, indoor construction began in the summer of 2021. On October 1st Taj and Glenn explored their new herd room (aka the crash room). The rhino team was amazed at what they saw: eight massive feet, each supporting 1,000 pounds of weight, sinking smoothly into the substrate causing all toes to disappear into the soft chip mix. Remarkably, in a few short months, Taj was no longer on pain medicine, did not show any clinical signs of CFD and his hoof wall was regrowing, revealing concave toes like those of wild GOHRs.



Al with Glen in modified RRD (Rhino Restraint Device)



Chad, Al and Amanda training foot behavior with Taj



Fluffing the sandy substrate has a season: dry. When the fall rains came to Seattle, the sandy soil was compacting within a few days of yard tilling. The summer schedule found a sweet spot at tilling twice per month, but that same schedule would not be sustainable in heavy rain fall. Planning and permitting throughout the winter lead to a busy spring construction schedule as all the yards were to be covered in wood chips. Musical rhinos, troubleshooting drainage, and managing a construction team was a new part of the rhino keeper's daily routine. At first, staff wondered how the rhinos would react to heavy machinery in adjacent yards. Rather than fleeing, 2.0 were instead incredibly resilient and preferred to watch the construction unfold.

Now living in an exhibit where 80% of the substrate is a bio-floor, keeper husbandry and rhino daily routine has changed significantly. Training priorities shifted to foot behaviors to gather photos, metrics and eventually radiographs of Taj's foot progress as well as Glenn's healthy feet for reference. As new challenges arise, keepers greet these issues with a positive attitude knowing that Taj and Glenn's lives have dramatically improved.

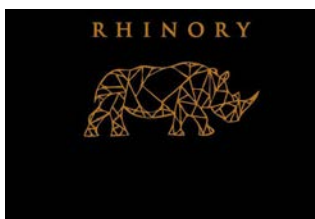


chip drop in hill and midden yards



Glenn and Taj on new substrate

Al Kennedy
Woodland Park Zoo



The Rhinory

Fredericksburg TX



How does a winery get the idea of combining rhinos and wine?? In 2016, our owners Craig Stevens and Chesney Castleberry were on a safari in South Africa when rhinos were poached and killed near their camp. They saw the devastation that such an event has on not only the rangers trying to save and protect the rhinos, but also to the community that depends on the survival of the rhino for the tourism economy. It was at this point, that they both decided to dedicate

money, land and soul to a new project that could help increase populations here in the U.S. It was out of love for wine and rhinos that the Rhinory was born – a winery with real rhino conservation on 55 acres in the beautiful hill country of Fredericksburg, TX. There is a simple goal here at the Rhinory – to serve excellent wine while inspiring our guests to love rhinos and their conservation in beautiful and peaceful surroundings.



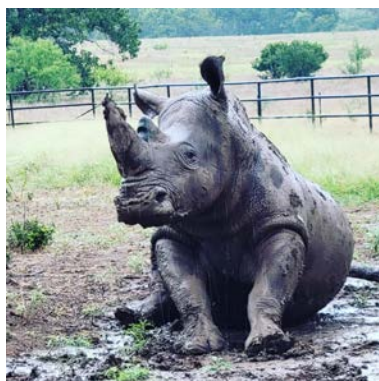
We are starting our rhino program off with our male Southern white rhino “Blake” who is on breeding loan to us from Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose Texas. Blake arrived on March 5, 2022 into an active construction zone, but took everything in stride and settled down quickly to his routine. Blake was chosen for us since he was starting to cause a little strife in his herd at Fossil Rim, and because he had a calm and sweet personality that we would need for our guest encounter. The encounters are run Friday, Saturday and Sunday 3 times daily for about 30 minutes. We have a limit of 4 guests per encounter so that there is the ability to really allow our guests to connect and be inspired by Blake. Our encounters are \$125.00 per person with a barn tour and 30 minutes spent with keepers and Blake. 100% of our encounter proceeds go directly back to International Rhino Foundation.

Next year, we hope to start on phase two of the Rhinory by building out our new barn for 2-3 females, space for offspring and extending Blake’s paddock of 2 ½ acres to 7 -10 acres for breeding. Our third phase goal is to expand our rhino program by including black rhino on to the property with the end goal of having a breeding population. Carrying capacity for our property as it stands is 7 -10 rhinos including calves.



I have been incredibly fortunate to have worked 3 species of rhino spanning a 33 year career in the zoo industry. In March of 2022, I retired after 32 years at Denver Zoo, for the opportunity to build my own rhino program from scratch and truly concentrate completely on rhinos and their conservation. I have found that our ability to connect with our guests and educate has been amazingly different and special. Our mornings look the same as other keepers, but afterwards we spend the rest of our day interacting one on one with the Rhinory guests educating about Blake, rhinos and conservation. A job perk is award winning wine!!!

Not too bad of a retirement, huh?



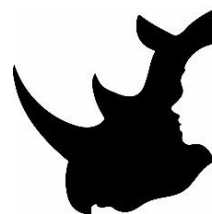
Chris Bobko
Rhinary

New Volunteer Program



The Volunteer Committee has been created to address the growing interest and need of members to be more actively involved within the International Rhino Keeper Association. As the IRKA evolves, offering more content, opportunities and avenues to serve the membership, there is an increased need for member help to accommodate these needs. We hope to be able to facilitate members in actively supporting, and being a part of the association in real time volunteer positions such as IT, social media, research, special projects and committee work. The majority of this volunteer work will be done virtually, via e-mail or possible zoom meetings.

In addition to meeting the volunteer needs of the IRKA, we are starting a volunteer partnership with the International Rhino Foundation. The IRF has specifically requested the help of the IRKA, because it recognizes the dedication and passion IRKA members have for saving rhinos. The first volunteer project need, identified by the IRF, is for IRKA members to research and identify the answer to the question: Can a regulated trade in rhino horn provide conservation value for rhinos? IRF is looking for the best current evidence both, for and against the rhino horn trade. This information will help them update their existing stance for public statements regarding the question of regulated trade of rhino horn. Volunteers will be split into two teams. One team will research the Pros of regulated rhino horn trade, while the other researches the Cons of regulated horn trade. Each team will be responsible for creating a reference list of approximately 10 cited sources that provide the best evidence for their teams position. Both teams will also be asked to write a one-to-two-page summary paper supporting the opinion that team researched.



Anyone interested in volunteering for the IRKA and/or IRF should contact Jason Faessler
jfaessler@nashvillezoo.org.

IRKA 2023 R.K.W.

hosted by
the Wilds

Join us May 7th - 11th for the Rhino Keeper Workshop.

Discuss all things rhino with professionals from across the globe working both *in situ* and *ex situ*.



****Early registration rates end October 1st****



Workshop will be at Salt Fork Lodge & Conference Center

<https://www.saltforkparklodge.com/>

Limited room block available in the Lodge at **\$115 per night**. Room block availability closes on **April 7th, 2023**



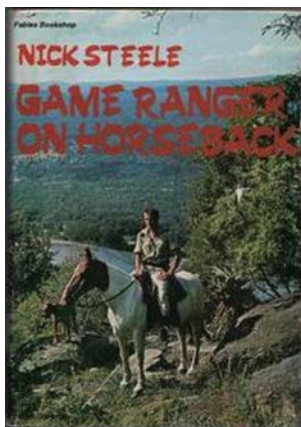
Call for Papers open July 1st, 2022 and close February 1st, 2023
Scholarships open July 1st, 2022 and close January 1st, 2023

[More Information](#)

Book Review

Game Ranger On Horseback

Nick Steele



"*Game Ranger on Horseback* is a book about the game reserves of Zululand; about the game animals; the men who guard them; the poachers who raid them; the floods, fires, drama and all the varied excitement of a ranger's life. Above all, it is a book about the wild animals--the magnificent rhinos, the strange wandering lions of Umfolozi, the beautiful antelope, the baboons, the reptiles, the birds, the insects and the trees of one of the most fascinating and beautiful wilderness areas on earth."

Nick Steele's thoroughly enjoyable writing style brings you into the daily life of the historic Umfolozi game reserve in the mid-60s. His depictions of patrols, public relations, and relocations reveal a passion for wild spaces and an early champion of rhino conservation.

[Correspondences](#)

Deaths:

North Carolina Zoo ----- female white "Olivia"
 Rotterdam Zoo ----- female GOH "Namaste"

Births:

San Diego Zoo Safari Park ----- Male white
 Cleveland Metro Parks Zoo ----- female black "Dalia"

Transfers:

Tanganyika Zoo received 1.4 Whites from Africa
 Leipzig Zoo received male black rhino "Vungu" from Rotterdam Zoo
 African Rhino Protection Initiative received female white "Helen" from Disney's Animal Kingdom

New Members

Autum Keller ----- Potter's Park Zoo
 Bridget Smith ----- Zoo Atlanta
 Colleen Joyce ----- Zoo New England
 Janene Lusson ----- Disney's Animal Kingdom
 Jessye Wojtusik ----- Henry Doorly Zoo
 Katherine Driscoll ----- Memphis Zoo
 Krystle Rivera ----- Montgomery Zoo
 Katrina Schrimmer ----- Mesker Park Zoo
 Lisa Merrick ----- Mesker Park Zoo
 Kevin Scotti ----- Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
 Katharine Lies ----- SDZWA
 Susan Petrunio ----- Zoo Knoxville
 Tamara Thompson-cunigan ----- Disney's Animal Kingdom
 Elizabeth Hammond ----- Lion Country Safari
 Seth Clem ----- San Francisco Zoo
 Gia Veau-Neely ----- Disney's Animal Kingdom
 Steve Metzler ----- Zoofari Parks



*Thank
you!*

New Conservation Partners

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

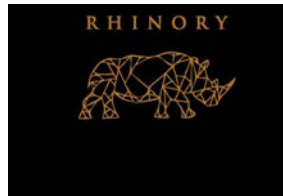


IRKA Partners



2022 Conservation Partners





Conservation Sponsors



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

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