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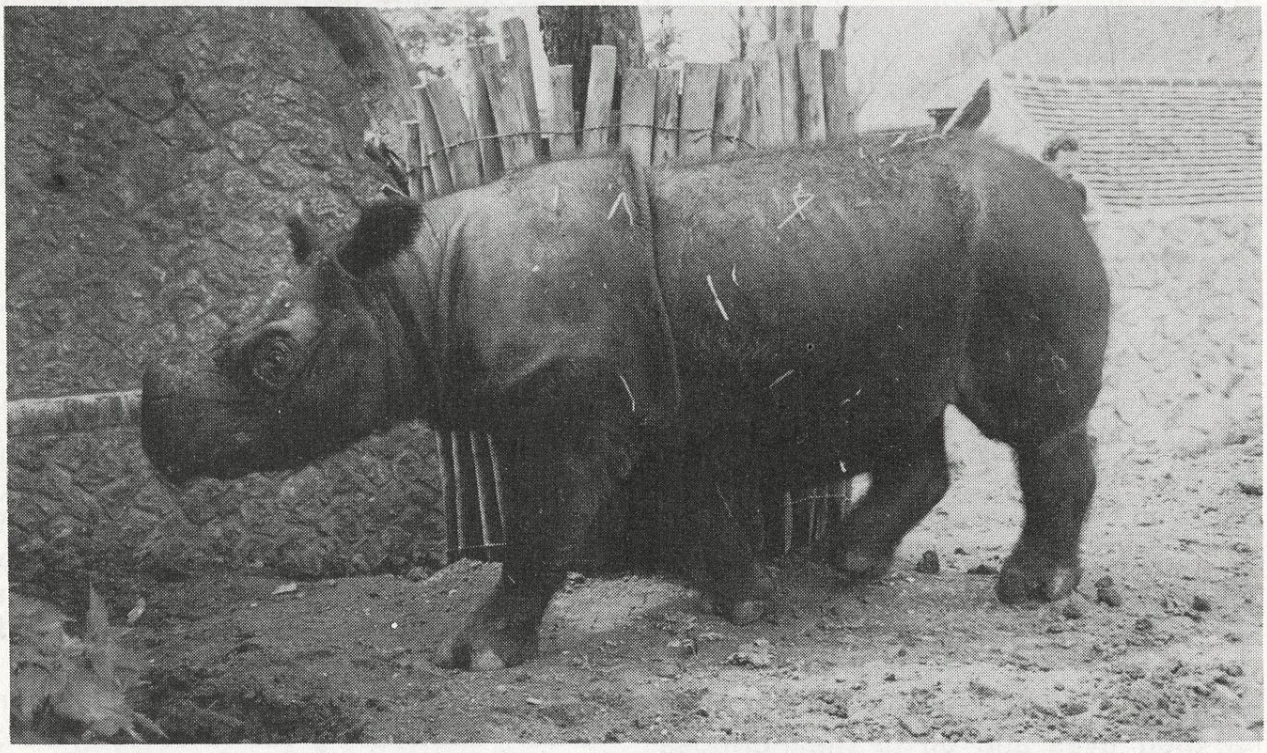
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CONSERVATION



The Sumatran rhino project in Indonesia

In May 1985 an historic agreement was signed between the Indonesian Government (Ministry of Forestry) and Howletts & Port Lympne Foundation (HPLF). It is of note that this was the first bilateral agreement between Indonesia and the UK following Mrs Thatcher's earlier visit to that country. The agreement provided for the capture of four pairs of Sumatran rhinos—the smallest of the rhinos and a descendant of the woolly rhino—from a forest in the province of Riau in Northern Sumatra. This forest of 250,000 acres is, within the next very few years, to be cut down and replaced by palm oil plantations, and thus the flora and fauna are doomed. The joint project provides for the salvation of at least some of the individuals of this highly endangered species. The world population is estimated to be between 500 and 1,000 animals, distributed between Sumatra, Malaysia and Thailand. With deforestation taking place at an alarming rate, the best we can hope for is to delay the extinction of the Sumatran rhino by a few years.

The project was to be financed and run by HPLF, and the 8 animals jointly owned by the two signatories. Two pairs are to remain in Indonesia and two pairs to be shipped to Port Lympne Zoo Park, Nr Hythe, Kent.

A professional team of expatriate biologists and zoologists, under the direction of Francesco Nardelli, the curator of Howletts and Port Lympne Zoo Parks, together with Indonesian Forestry Department officials selected a site within the forest and started building a base camp headquarters from which to direct operations. Concurrently trackers were working to determine the areas inhabited by rhinos and others, following this information, were digging traps on the selected sites. At the end of November 1985, we were rewarded with the capture of a young adult male rhino, who was appropriately named Torgamba after the forest in which he had lived. Two months later another animal—a female—was caught but within a short time of being discovered in the trap, she died having fractured her skull in her frenzy to escape. As a result of this loss, early in the project, morale sank to an all time low, although it had been anticipated that a death or two could occur in a venture of this nature. However, two

months later, at the end of March, 1986, a young male was caught, who is in fine shape and progressing well, and who is destined for Jakarta Zoo.

Torgamba arrived in UK on April 5th, 1986 after a long sea voyage to Singapore and onward shipment by air. He was accompanied throughout the journey by Mr Tom Begg, the director of Howletts and Port Lympne Zoo Parks. No problems have been encountered in the transfer from forest life to that in captivity, and it is to be hoped that before long a mate will be caught who will be as adaptable and steady as Torgamba. There are no plans to exhibit him to the public until the Sumatran rhino complex is complete in 1987.

Dolphins killed for their eyes

The Amazon river dolphin *(Inia geoffrensis)* are being slaughtered by fishermen for their eyes and oil in the Formosa River in Araguaia, north of Goias. The dolphins are being stranded while the river is dammed in the dry season to irrigate a huge agricultural project, poisoned by agricultural pesticides, attacked with guns and drowned or beaten to death. The eyes are sold as good luck charms for $1.50-$3.00 in markets and tourist shops in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian ecologists are air-lifting some dolphins to Minas Gerais state, but few survive the trauma.

Rhino deaths

Five black rhinos died in quarantine in Etosha National Park in South Africa. They were amongst twelve due to be sent to Augrabies National Park in exchange for 36 Cape buffalo. After the fifth death, the remaining seven were released and six more caught and taken to Augrabies without subjecting them to quarantine. The reason for the deaths is suspected to be a combination of unusually cold nights and stress from being penned. Unpenned, the rhinos would have dealt with the cold by increased activity. The six rhinos in Augrabies have settled in well.

Leopards increase in Israel

Leopards *(Panthera pardus)* are increasing in numbers in Israel and expanding their range, perhaps because of effective conservation of ibex *(Capra ibex)* and other prey animals. In some places electric fencing is being erected to discourage them from becoming too familiar with human settlements.

Fauna & Flora Preservation Society Illegal Pet Trade Survey

Reptiles and amphibians are among Britain's most vulnerable wild animals. Recently the Fauna & Flora Preservation Society (FFPS) launched a campaign to assess the extent of the illegal trade in these animals and its impact on wild populations.

It is illegal to trade in Britain's four rarest species: great crested newt; natterjack toad; sand lizard and smooth snake. The remaining eight native species—palmate newt; common or smooth newt; common frog; common toad; common lizard; slow-worm; grass snake; adder—may not be offered for sale without a licence issued by the Department of the Environment. Preliminary research by the FFPS has shown that over 80 per cent of pet shops surveyed sell these species without the correct licence.

The new campaign has four main aims: To determine how many species are sold in the UK without the correct licence; how many are being imported into the UK; how many are taken for sale from sites protected by local bye-laws, or without the owner's permission; and to help the FFPS make a recommendation as to whether trade in these species should be prohibited.

The new survey will take place over the next six months. Volunteer members of the public are required to help by making a survey of pet shops in their area using recording forms, which may be obtained from: Tom Langton, FFPS, c/o London Zoo, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY, from whom further details are available (Tel: 01-387 9656).

Howletts & Port Lympne
Zoo Parks, Kent, UK

Torgamba, the Sumatran rhino and latest addition to John Aspinall's impressive collection of rare and endangered animals, who arrived at Port Lympne Zoo Park in early April, was allowed to see the sun for the first time recently.

When lots of humans were packed in cars heading for the coast, zoo keepers Jimmy Shave and Gordon Scott thought that the temperature outside was hot enough for their tropical charge to feel the heat of the English sun on his back. And he certainly enjoyed it.

Torgamba was caught in November 1985 and quickly settled down, acclimatising well in his enclosure in the forest. Preparation then started to get him used to the kinds of food he would be given in the UK as well as various leaves and branches.

Torgamba's twice weekly fruit delivery now includes cases of papaya, kiwi fruit, mango, passion fruit, pineapple, figs, leeks, tomatoes, bananas, melons, apples, lettuce and potatoes.

Torgamba, together with his mate and another couple of 'Woolly Rhinos', when they are caught, will be housed in spacious paddocks at Port Lympne Zoo Park in woodlands not dissimilar to their native habitat. Work has already started on this and everyone hopes that the four rare animals will be in their new surroundings by the beginning of next year.

