



Borneo Rhino Sanctuary (BRS) programme (restricted distribution)

Quarterly report : 1 January – 31 March 2010

Programme objective

To prevent the extinction of the Sumatran rhinoceros in Sabah by protecting wild rhinos and by bringing rhinos together in managed breeding facilities at Tabin Wildlife Reserve

Main participating agencies

Sabah Wildlife Department (SWD), Borneo Rhino Alliance (BORA), Sabah Forestry Department, WWF-Malaysia.

Main financing agencies during this quarter

Yayasan Sime Darby; Sabah Wildlife Department; Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment; BORA (funds raised from multiple donors in March 2009); WWF-Malaysia.

Programme description

- protection and monitoring of wild rhinos in Tabin Wildlife Reserve (BORA-SWD) and Danum Valley Conservation Area (WWF-Malaysia), the only two areas where potentially viable wild populations exist.
- establishing Borneo Rhinoceros Sanctuary (BRS) breeding facilities (a managed, fenced area) inside Tabin Wildlife Reserve.
- bringing isolated remnant rhinos from non-viable situations, into BRS.
- establishing a sustainable financing scheme to allow long-term operations of BRS.
- appointing a professional company to manage BRS and its rhinos

Activities and progress

Monitoring wild rhinos at Tabin Due to a focus during this quarter on selecting a site for BRS breeding facilities, and on rhino rescue work, only short ad hoc monitoring/patrol trips were

done during this quarter including the north-east of Tabin and the Tabin-FELDA border. WWF-Malaysia provided 10 camera traps, which were placed 18-19 February within the home range of Puntung (believed to be a young female rhino, living in the south-western part of Tabin Wildlife Reserve and monitored by SOS-Rhino/BORA since 2007).

Interim rhino facilities and Tam The forest paddock built at end of 2008 to house Kretam (Tam) the male rhino at Tabin, was modified over the period December 2009 – February 2010, in order to form an additional adjacent interim forest paddock for accommodation of the next rhino to be rescued. Due to a dry period from early February to mid March, water had to be brought by vehicle from km 6 of the core area road to the interim rhino facilities over a period of several weeks, and water had to be pumped into his forest wallows.

Design of BRS breeding facilities Konsultant A consulting company (Konsultant Kumpulan (MT) Sdn Bhd) was appointed to design the BRS breeding facilities. During this reporting period, discussions were held amongst relevant experts and institutions regarding the suitability of the original BRS sanctuary plan (a single 4,500 hectare fenced forest area inside Tabin Wildlife Reserve). The likelihood that only very few rhinos can be successfully caught and translocated in Sabah, and the chances that some may be infertile or too old to breed, suggests the need for close monitoring and treatment of all rhinos caught, for extended periods after capture. In February, it was announced that mating between a young male and young female rhino at Way Kambas Rhino Sanctuary in Sumatra, Indonesia, has resulted in a pregnancy. This is a remarkable result, as this Sanctuary has been in operation since 1998 without any previous successful mating, and indicates that care and close management of healthy rhinos in small adjacent individual forest paddocks, after all, is probably the best way to arrange and manage breeding facilities under BRS. It was proposed to Sabah government that the BRS breeding facilities design be modified to follow more closely the Way Kambas design. Possible sites to build the modified BRS design were assessed during this reporting period. A suitable site was identified, about 3 km north-east of the Tabin Wildlife Reserve headquarters. This site will require rebuilding of about 1.5 km of old logging road abandoned in the 1970s. Location, topography and forest condition are good. It is anticipated, however, that water supply during dry periods will be a problem, and that either a dam on a nearby stream, or groundwater abstraction, may be needed.

Rhino rescue for BRS breeding facilities Possible sites for capture of Puntung were assessed from January through March. The dry period from early February to mid March caused Puntung to spend more time than usual in the lower altitude parts of her range, near Malambabula River. Accordingly a decision was made in mid March to attempt to capture Puntung, and a specific site for a trap was chosen. Purchase of materials to build the trap was done in the last part of this reporting period, and construction of a wooden crate (a part of the trap) completed by 31 March.

Staff accommodation Work on construction of the Tabin Wildlife Officer house and terrace house for staff associated with BRS (both houses funded by Yayasan Sime Darby) continued during this quarter. Work commenced in February on a major renovation of old kitchens and stores behind the wooden longhouse at Tabin, in order to provide additional rooms for Borneo Rhino Alliance (BORA) field staff, along with new kitchens, washrooms and store.

Staffing Three additional field staff were recruited by BORA starting 1 February : Makarius John (acting coordinator for rhino monitoring and capture), Marikus Suyut (driver and assistant keeper for Tam) and Indra Buana Mail (keeper for Tam).

Meetings held BRS technical committee, 12 January & 1 February; SWD programme coordinator and BORA executive director, 11 & 22 January, 17 & 28 March; SWD-BORA, 26 January (on major renovation of old kitchens at Tabin); SWD-BORA-Yayasan Sime Darby, 15 March; SWD-BORA-BRS consultant, 2 & 25 February, 2 & 5 March; BORA board meetings, 5 January & 4 March, and internal staff workshop 8-9 February; BORA-WWF, 1 February & 18 March.

International connections Dr Abdul Hamid Ahmad and Junaidi Payne (BORA), Dr Zainal Zahari Zainuddin and Dr Marshal Chuat (WWF-Malaysia) participated (14-15 January) in the Sumatran Rhino Global Management and Propagation Board (GMPB) meeting held in Bogor, Indonesia. This board is an ad hoc group of global experts on the Sumatran rhino. It was learned that Government of Indonesia (through Ministry of Forestry) currently has a policy of not supporting mixing of sub-species of rare animals (such as the Sumatran and Bornean sub-species of the Sumatran rhino). The same group then visited Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary at Way Kambas, Lampung province (15-17 January) to seek latest updates on attempts to breed Sumatran rhinos. J Payne also participated as a member of the board of Yayasan Badak Indonesia (18 January).

Dr Ahimsa Campos-Arceiz visited Tabin 3-5 February to explore possibilities of conducting research on wild fruits in the diet of rhinos. Mr Michael Ernst, senior large mammal keeper at Zoo Leipzig, was at Lok Kawi Wildlife Park and Tabin, 15 February-30 March. Mr Rasmus Havmøller of Copenhagen University visited Tabin 13-24 March to obtain information towards his thesis.

Sustainable financing

Tengku D Z Adlin proposed BORA as a candidate for the Merdeka Awards scheme (www.merdekaaward.com). Anita Mohamad (Anita Fragrance, www.anitafrgrance.com.my) produced a small amount of experimental soap containing clay from Lipad mud volcano.

Other issues

Three Ford Ranger four wheel drive vehicles donated by Yayasan Sime Darby were received by BORA on 3 March, for use in BRS programme work.

Dr Zainal Zahari Zainuddin, recruited by BORA as veterinarian and field manager for Tabin, had at end of this quarter been unable to secure approval from his employer (federal government of Malaysia, Perhilitan) to take long unpaid leave. He made several short visits to Tabin to provide advice pending full-time work with BORA.

Following discussions with Carl Traeholt (studying forest-dwelling tapirs in Peninsular Malaysia) a satellite tracking collar was ordered to be placed on Tam at Tabin; the idea is to ascertain if there any problems associated with satellite tracking rhinos in Tabin, in case such tracking of wild rhinos needs to be done in the future,

Plans for next quarter

(1) Set and monitor pitfall trap for Puntung. (2) Design BRS rhino breeding facilities.



(Left) Re-construction of Tam's forest paddock to become two adjacent paddocks. (Right) Commencement of re-construction of the old kitchens/store at Tabin to become staff accommodation (18 February).



(Left) Setting of a camera trap within the home range of Puntung. (Right) One of Puntung's mud wallows.



(Left) Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary at Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra, the model upon which Borneo Rhino Sanctuary (BRS) will now be based. (Right) one of the surveys done to select a revised site for BRS (BRS programme coordinator Dr Sen Nathan on right, BORA field team leader France Bianus on left)



(Left) Malambabula River after six weeks with no rain, mid March 2010. (Right) a tell-tale sign of Puntung, a normal hind footprint at left and the stump (missing toe nails) of her front left foot at right.



(Left): Rhino rescue team leader and senior wildlife ranger Herman Stawin, left, and BORA acting field coordinator Makarius John. (Right) BORA staff Justine Sagunting, Junaidi Payne, Rasaman Jaya, Andrew Ginsos and Tinrus Tindok on recce for potential rhino capture sites.



(Left) construction of the BRS HQ senior staff house (mid March). (Right) Indra Buana Mail and Makarius John (25 March) take their turn at building the crate intended to catch Puntung.



(Left) receipt of three Ford Rangers at Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC; BORA's registered office) by Dr Abdul Hamid Ahmad, BORA chairman and director of ITBC, from Mr Christopher Sipain, branch manager of Autoconnexion Kota Kinabalu. (Right) one of the Ford Rangers near Tam's interim paddock at Tabin, with BORA field staff Augustine David and senior wildlife ranger Herman Stawin