

Now or never: What will it take to save the Sumatran rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* from extinction?

Abstract

In 1994 Alan Rabinowitz decried what he regarded as lackadaisical attempts by governments, NGOs and international funding agencies to conserve the Sumatran rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*. Sixteen years on it is timely to evaluate whether his warnings were heeded. We review the current conservation status of *D. sumatrensis* throughout its range and the latest threats and challenges complicating efforts to conserve this species. Recent data from governments, NGOs and researchers indicate that the global population could be as low as 216, a decline from c. 320 estimated in 1995. Based on lessons learnt and expert opinions we call on decision makers to focus on two core strategies for conservation of *D. sumatrensis*: (1) the translocation of wild individuals from existing small, isolated or threatened forest patches into semi-in situ captive breeding programmes, and (2) a concomitant enhancement of protection and monitoring capacities in priority areas that have established these breeding facilities or have recorded relatively high population estimates and track encounter rates. At least USD 1.2 million is required to implement these strategies annually in four priority areas: Bukit Barisan Selatan and Way Kambas National Parks on Sumatra, and Danum Valley Conservation Area and Tabin Wildlife Reserve on Sabah. Given that conservation funds are rarely secure and *D. sumatrensis* is still in decline we call on potential donors to help secure and augment existing capacities of organizations in these four priority areas before committing resources to elucidate the status of the species in other areas such as Gunung Leuser and Taman Negara National Parks.